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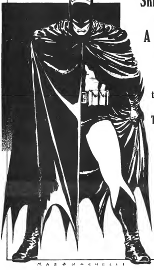

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CONTENTS

Features

29
JIM STARLIN
AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN WHO SHOT CAPTAIN MARVEL—ON *DREADSTAR*, AND MORE
by **DAVID SMAY**

46
ETERNITY SMITH
BEHIND THE SCENES OF RENEGADE'S FIRST COLOR ADVENTURE COMIC
by **MARK WAID**

51
ESPERS
A LOOK AT ECLIPSE'S NEW SERIES
by **SUE DEAUNIM**

57
SPACE CLUSTERS
A CHAT WITH ART COVER ON HIS GRAPHIC NOVEL
by **KOMICKAZE**

Depts.

8
EDITORIAL

10
PERSPECTIVE
HEIDI GOES TO THE KIRBYS
by **HEIDI MacDONALD**

12
2 PG. SPREAD

15
NEWSLINE

20
SILLY COVER
"THE SWATCHMEN"

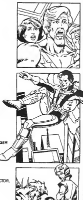
21
COMING DISTRACTIONS

40
FIRSTLOOK
A NEW OLD TEAM ON *BADGER*

68
COMICS IN REVIEW
WEST COAST AVENGERS, X-FACTOR, AND OTHERS

78
AMAZING READERS

90
SMALL PRESS WATCH



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DAVID SMAY

EDITORIAL

We made a mistake in *Amazing Heroes* #96 and we'd like to correct it. In our 2-Page Spread we ran a review of *Marvel Age* by Mark Waid. I'll let Mr. Waid go first:

"Mistake #1: I unwittingly made a false statement when I said 'the writer of this piece went out of his way to shunt Kirby off in the sidelines of the article'; in point of fact, Jack Kirby's name is secreted in that piece, as someone pointed out to me after I read it and missed it (twice). It's still buried pretty damn well, but it is there.

"Mistake #2: Looking at the situation with a cooler head, I also realize that attacking *Marvel Age* with phrases like 'good little Nazis' is like attacking a toad-frog with an Ultimate Nullifier. Within six hours after *AH* #96 hit the stands, I took it upon myself to call Kurt [Busiek] in order to smooth things over with him. I asked him to pass along my personal apologies to Jim [Salicrup], as well, then got to work on this formal retraction.

"So: I apologize to Kurt Busiek for calling him a Nazi. I apologize to Jim Salicrup for calling him a Nazi. I toyed with the idea of apologizing to the Nazi Party, too, just to see if it would make the Smayhead fly all the way out here to Texas just to smash my word processor, but I decided that I'm on thin enough ice as it is.

"Finally, for the record, although no one has asked for this retraction (yet), I'd like to amend the sweeping generalization, 'Anyone over the age of 16 who works for *Marvel Age* is beyond the pale.' What I meant to say was, 'Anyone over the age of 16 who writes for *Marvel Age* is beyond the pale.' Sorry, Fred and Kyle."

As you can see, Mark is graciously trying to take the heat for what we both know was an editorial mistake. Basically, I made a non-decision decision when I ran the review, even though my gut instinct was to remove the offensive "little Nazi" remark. If I sound a little pissed about the whole thing, please don't misunderstand me. I don't begrudge the apology that Mr. Busiek and Mr. Salicrup deserve; I'm just angry with myself. I must've left my spine at home that day.

And yet I find myself unwilling to disown Mark's review. As I mention in this issue's lettercol (where the Kirby artwork controversy is discussed/argued at length) I'm wary of a battle of bullshit, so let me merely note that I think Waid is essentially right when he says Marvel is downplaying Kirby's role in the creation of the Marvel Universe. More importantly, the artwork controversy is still unresolved. In a recent issue of *Fantasy Advertiser* Jim Shooter says that he would like to return the artwork but that the matter is tied up in legal knots. This seems to me to be an abdication of responsibility similar to my aforementioned non-decision decision. I would like to make an appeal to Jim Shooter that he too remember to bring his spine to work and cut through the legal Gordian knot that prevents the return of Jack Kirby's artwork. He has the power to make it happen; I would like to think that he has the conscience.

For a painless primer on the issues involved, refer to the letters column. I'll bet we can clear some things up for you.

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Amazing Heroes	6,7	FBI	71,74,81,85,88-89,91
B Movie Presents	62	Fishwrap	56
Blackthorne Publishing	14	Graphic Serials	4
Comico	34	Marvel Comics Group	65
Comics Interview	45	Matrix Graphic Series	36
DC Comics	3	Onward	26
Eclipse	2,9,11,19,23,32,54	Renegade Press	66-67

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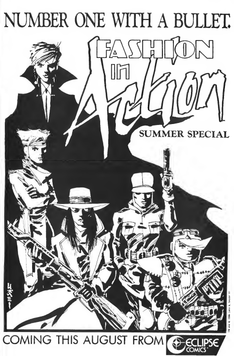

PERSPECTIVE

Heidi Goes to the Kirbys

by Heidi MacDonald

Awards. I love them. You love them. Predictions. You love them. I hate them, because when I'm wrong I look like a dodo. And yet in the hallowed tradition of the Oscars, Emmys, etc. I'm here to take an advance look at the 1986 Kirby awards, the nominees, the favorites, etc. But though I get to look stupid when my predictions don't come true, at least I get to pick my favorites in each category, so maybe there's something in it for me after all.

All in all an honorable list of nominees, a body of work which can be pointed to with pride. Given that the true avant garde of comics will always remain on the outskirts of acceptability, its a diverse field, a challenging field, and no matter who wins, the winners will be deserving ones. In other words, there's no "Dazzler: the Movie" here.

Best New Series: Let's start with an easy one. It would be kind of cute if another canceled comic won—*'Mazing Man*—but it would take a bulldozer to get this award away from Eclipse's *Miracleman*, despite the fact that it isn't really new, but a reprint. (Not a great year for good new titles, by the way.) Heidi's pick: *Miracleman*. Scary, brilliant stuff, that's why.

Best Finite Series: Another easy winner here is *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Even though it won last year, too. But I can explain that. You see, when the superheroes went back to the dawn of time, they inadvertently removed three months from 1985 and added three months to 1986, changing the cover dates of all comics published from the middle of August until the end of October, and causing only those voters who went back to the dawn of time with them to remember what they voted for. It's really simple when you look at it the right way. Mark Waid told me so. Heidi's Pick: *Pelleas And Melisande* gets the opera lover's vote, but for all its problems, *Crisis* was a pretty important event, and comics scripters will be sifting through the repercussions for a long time to come.

Best Black-and-White Comic: *Cerebus* should repeat here. Sure he's a self-indulgent litle pisser, but he's entitled cuz he's a genius. On the other hand, enough people may be tiring of Sim's more trying shenanigans to swing their votes over to *Love & Rockets*, but that book is still a perennial underdog, as the Fantagraphics connection will always work against it. Heidi's Pick: *Love and Rockets*.

Best Graphic Album: The fact that all of the nominees are reprints does not bode well for the graphic album format in America. I'll tell ya. The fact that all of these series originally appeared two or three years ago and have stood the test of time does bode well, however. All four nominees—*Hard Times*, *The Rocketeer*, *Love and Rockets* and *Nexus*—are strong contenders, but *The Rocketeer* should easily steal the garter belt vote from *Hard Times*—with the help of the die-hard Betty faction. Heidi's pick: Well, despite that fact that I love *Love & Rockets*, these reprints are more anthology than a real continued story, and that weighs against it. *Nexus* is on the uneven side. That leaves the flashy, nasty *Hard Times* or Dave Stevens's paean to the pulps, *The Rocketeer*. . .tough choice. . . Well, I'll go with Cliff and Betty, simply because very few comics have ever had so much painstaking perfectionism put into them as the Rocketeer.

Best Writer: I pity the fools who have to go up against God—or Alan Moore as he's also known. The odds are really stacked since he's nominated for both *Miracleman* and *Swamp Thing*. There's a chance that the Moore vote will split, leaving Frank Miller to sneak through, but betting against Moore in Best Writer would be a little like betting against Wolverine in the Best Snikt category. Heidi's Pick: Yet I choose Gilbert Hernandez, who puts a level of thought, conscience, and courage into his "Heartbreak Soup" stories that is unparalleled in American comics.

Best Artist: Wow, how strange to see this category not stacked with the regular fanboy faves—leaving some rather unexpected, but no less deserving, choices. Alan Davis doesn't have much press behind him, and Craig Russell's infrequent appearance probably leaves him out of the running. That leaves Steve Rude and Jaime Hernandez, and that's not an easy one to call. My head says Rude, but my heart says that the American comics industry will finally give one of the Hernandez brothers some recognition. However, resistance to giving a Fantagraphics comic an award in a Fantagraphics sponsored event may still keep Jaime from the winner's circle. In which case, I'll be glad it's Steve Rude, who just gets better and better, stepping to the podium. Heidi's pick: Rude or Hernandez isn't an easy one for me either. . . but Jaime's work is so seemingly effortless in its verisimilitude, so surprising, so stunningly real and keenly observed. . .the man deserves an award, just once.

Best Art Team: Here's where the Byrnes and Perezes are hanging out these days. Perez/Ordway are the clear favorites here, and their work on *Crisis* was pretty mind boggling when you think about it. Bissette/Totleben are the dark horses. Heidi's Pick: I figure Sim and Gerhard use too many stats to win an award, but their collaborative work is still seamless in its storytelling.

Best Writer/Artist: A somewhat puzzling category, in that it now covers more than one man armies to include writer/artist teams, with Matt Wagner the sole solo nominee. Frank Miller and David Mazzuchelli have to be considered the front runners, as Miller is hot, and his return to *Daredevil* has irresistible elements of both Messiah and Prodigal Son written all over it. Heidi's Pick: The fact that neither Dave Sim nor Gilbert Hernandez was even nominated is pretty flabbergasting from where I sit, but from the nominees I'll take Baron/Rude for *Nexus*, a book that has yet to take itself too seriously—Thank God, and whose manic pacing is more fun than a barrel of hilariators.

Best Single Issue: Here's where the going gets tough for a prognosticator. Alan Moore has no less than three entries here—*Superman Annual*, *Miracleman* #1, and *Swamp Thing* #43, but his biggest threat will be *Daredevil* #227, while *Mage* #8 is a worthy choice, but a distinct also ran. The way I see it, it should boil down to either *Daredevil* or

Miracleman. Both are the sort of stories that voters like—radical new directions, shocking superhero surprises. I'll *say Miracleman* by a hair, but don't be surprised to see *Daredevil* win. Heidi's Pick: It's hard to argue with either choice, really, since both Miller and Moore breath new life into superheroes cliches with astounding verve. Still, I'll pick *Miracleman* again, because Moore manages to twist every single superhero cliche into something dark and ominous and *unexpected*. Throw in that framing sequence, the Nietzsche quote and you have a comic that shatters convention. (See my review in *The Comics Journal* #106 for further praise for both these comics.)

Best Continuing Series: There are no bozos here for the big one, it's between the Alan Moore dual entry—the frightening *Swamp Thing* and the unpredictable *Miracleman*—Frank Miller's revitalized, risk-taking *Daredevil*, the giddily thrilling space opera romp of *Nexus*, and the incomparable *Love & Rockets*. Nonetheless, *L&R* is still too way out for some voters, and *Nexus* isn't splashy enough. However, this is where the Alan Moore vote should really be split, as voters can't choose between thrills or chills. That means that *Daredevil* should be the big winner. Superheroes are still a more comfortable choice for many people, and this is no exception. Heidi's Pick: As if you had to ask. *Love and Rockets*. Jaime's work has turned to the mysterious, mundane paths of urban survival, (as he scrupulously avoids crowd pleasing 'Mechanics' tales), but Gilbert Hernandez has come into his own, as a storyteller of rare depth and skill. If there were a "Best Single Story" category, his "Holidays in the Sun" would be the runaway favorite.

So. When the actual winners are announced, they'll doubtless bear no resemblance to the preceding, and then you can all make fun of me, but there you go. All I ask is that you keep your custard pies to yourselves.

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Scuttlebutt

IN IT FOR THE BUCKS: "You have to remember that I was 13 when I started writing (comics). For me, it wasn't a whim or a juvenile fantasy that prompted my stab at authorship. It was the need for money, in a big way. What else can a 13 year old do? Sell papers? I did that, too, by the way." Jim Shooter quoted in *Legion Outpost* #8. *—Jim Korkis*

VHY A DUCK? The May issue of *Harper's Magazine* reveals that the number of votes that Donald Duck received in the 1985 Swedish parliamentary election was 291. *—Mark Petach*

AND IN HIS TIME OFF... George Perez, speaking to fans at the Creation convention held March 22 at the Disneyland Hotel, chatted about his non-comics activities.

Among his interests Perez included participation in small theatre groups: "I'm doing a production of *Guys and Dolls* right now," and his wife's bellydancing activities.

"I'm her *loudest* audience ...," Perez said, and noted that he was the "... official mascot of several bellydancing troupes ..."

Perez identified issue thirty-eight of the *Teen Titans* book, "Who Killed Donna Troy?," as his favorite, and that he'd "... love to do a mini-series with the *Metal Men*." *—Mark Petach*

CORRUPT AND DEPRAVED, ALL FOR A DIME. "Charges that (the comics) were, in general, a corrupt influence, glorifying crime and depravity can only, in all fairness be answered: 'but of course, why else read them?'" That's from Jules Feiffer. *—Brian Busch*

CAPSULE REVIEWS

GROO THE WANDERER #18

Groo the Wanderer is about as close to perfection as a comic book can come. Every issue is dedicated to furthering the proposition that no matter what Groo does, it will be wrong. He's like a bourgeois version of Chuck Jones's Coyote; all he wants to do is belong. And like Jones and his writer Michael Maltese, the *Groo* team of Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier dedicate themselves to ringing as many variations as possible on the theme of Groo Screwing Up.

Although Groo's stupidity is of heroic proportions, it is ultimately a fate that does him in. Even his (rare) smart decisions bring about chaos—sometimes because everyone was *expecting* him to do something stupid, sometimes just because of a bit of unforeseeable bad luck.

How many different melodies can you play with the same key note? A lot. My particular favorite type of gag is when Groo gets involved in perpetrating some kind of deception. He skitters among the extremes of forgetting what he's supposed to do (with bad results), remembering what he's supposed to do and doing it wrong (with worse results), and finally doing it just right when the situation has been reversed and it is the least desirable thing to do (with absolutely catastrophic results). The story, a few months back, where Groo joined an acting troupe had this kind of structure; it may have been the funniest of the lot.

The current issue, though, does have a special surreal twist: the full-page advertisement facing page 8 of the story—an ad for Marvel's "New Universe"—can actually be read as *part of the story*. Is the new Marvel universe the result of Groo's most titanic gaffe? I've heard worse explanations.

Sergio Aragones remains the premier cartoonist of his generation. His work is witty, dense, coherent, inventive, and beautifully researched. And Mark Evanier, who can set up and deliver a punchline like no one else in the field (except maybe Dave Sim), deserves special credit for eliminating all references to cheese dip exactly at that moment when they were beginning to get tiresome. Now *that's* a pro.

—Kim Thompson

THOR #367-370

After the fashion of Byrne and Miller, the last of Marvel's Big Three comic book auteurs here begins his gradual withdrawal from the title he resurrected. *Thor* 367-69 was a wistful fairy tale that allowed Walt Simonson the opportunity to indulge in yet another identity-switching coronation story, which still managed to afford the reader some pleasure due to the obvious pleasure their creator derives from putting the Asgardians through so many changes and showing them to be just folks. Aside from the covers of these three issues, which consciously recall the title's Kirby/Colletta glory days and rank with the best work he's ever done, there is a definite sense of Simonson coasting downhill after the delirious summit of the *Frog of Thunder* sequence. The usual Simonson truck-size plot holes were all present in force (what was Lorelei doing at the coronation while passed out on the floor of Loki's castle, where did the troll mother get the sword, and where, either here or in the *Balder the Brave* mini-series, is to be found any reason for Balder suddenly making like a three-way bulb?), but it was otherwise carefully structured and pleasant enough. Just not what you'd hope to see from the writer/artist who swaggered into his tenure on this book with a scene of a businessman force-feeding his trussed-up secretary an order of french fries, causing her to vanish in a puff of smoke. Thanks for the memories, Walt.

Issue #370 was another instance of Marvel's fill-in stories, of late, being better than the surrounding series, with Owsley, Buscema, Russell and—of all things—the Flexographic press—teaming up to produce a neat little Western that could have credited Jesse Marsh and Joe Kubert as spiritual advisors. *—Andrew Christie*

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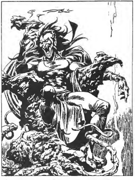
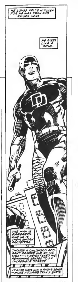
NEWS

Marvel Miscellania: Team-up titles, Daredevil's new writer, and more




HE LOVES HELL'S KITCHEN FOR HE WAS BORN AND RAISED HERE
HE RISES LIKE A KING
THE MAN IS DAREDEVIL AND HE IS THEIR SWORN PROTECTOR
THOUGH A CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT ROBBED HIM OF HIS SIGHT--IT HEIGHTENED HIS REMAINING SENSES TO AN INCREDIBLE DEGREE
IT ALSO GAVE HIM A RADAR SENSE--MORE ACCURATE THAN A BAT'S.

FOUR TEAM-UP TITLES: The devil gets his due as Marvel presents ***Mephisto Vs. Four Heroes*** this fall. In this series, written by AL MILGROM and drawn by JOHN BUSCEMA, the Lord of Evil battles Thor, the X-Men, X-Factor, and the Fantastic Four. Meanwhile, ***G.I. Joe Vs. Transformers*** teams up Marvel's two most popular toy tie-ins, in a four issue series written by MIKE HIGGINS and drawn by HERB TRIMPE. Both of these premiere in September.

Coming up later this fall are ***Fantastic Four Vs. X-Men*** and an ***Avengers/X-Men*** mini-series.

DAREDEVIL TEAM: Contrary to earlier reports, STEVE ENGLEHART will not take over the writing on ***Daredevil***; he will be doing only one issue, ***#237***. Beginning with issue ***#238***, ANN NOCENTI will be taking over the series, with LOUIS WILLIAMS and AL WILLIAMSON becoming the regular team with ***#239***. Issue ***#238***, by the way, is penciled by SAL BUSCEMA and is a "Mutant Massacre" tie-in. And ***#236*** is a special fill-in issue written by ANN NOCENTI and drawn by BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH.

LEFT: Mephisto in his new series. ABOVE: DD by Windsor-Smith.

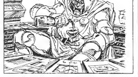
NOVELS: The FRANK MILLER/BILL SIENKIEWICZ ***Daredevil*** graphic novel is now titled ***The Kingpin***, and is scheduled to ship in late August. That will be followed up by JON JAY MUTH's long-awaited *Dracula* adaptation, which ships in early September. Coming up after that is an ***Inhumans*** graphic novel by ANN NOCENTI and BRETT BREEDING, and a ***Shadow*** graphic novel by DENNY O'NEIL, MICHAEL Wm. KALUTA, and BERNI WRIGHTSON.

POSTERS **:** Marvel will be releasing two special posters this fall: a "New Universe" poster painted by BILL SIENKIEWICZ, and a "Classic Universe" poster (featuring dozens upon dozens of heroes) pencilled by KERRY GAMMILL and inked by JOE RUBINSTEIN. They'll be selling for $3.95 apiece.

PEOPLE: BILL MANTLO and KEITH GIFFEN are the team behind ***Peter Parker, Spectacular Spider-Man #120*** . . . ANN NOCENTI, BRENT ANDERSON, and AL WILLIAMSON provide a book-length Moon Knight story for ***Marvel Fanfare #30*** . . . MARK SILVESTRI pencils ***X-Factor #12***.

HEROES: Colossus is the X-Man featured in CHRIS CLAREMONT and JOHN BOLTON's new story in ***Classic X-Men #5*** . . . Doctor Doom is the guest villain in ***Cloak and Dagger #10***, which is pencilled by BRET BLEVINS . . . The Nomad returns in ***Captain America #325*** . . . Ant-Man and the Wasp are reunited for the first time in a long time in ***Avengers #275*** . . . Sabretooth is the guest villain in ***X-Men #213***, which also features the conclusion of the "Mutant Massacre" storyline, the pencilling of ALAN DAVIS, and the baptism of fire of Psylocke, the newest X-Man . . . Spider-Woman returns in ***Iron Man #214*** . . . Dakota North is featured in ***Peter Parker, Spectacular Spider-Man #122*** . . . the Absorbing Man, Hela, Loki, the Man-Beast, and the Wrecker all combine to make life miserable for the God of Thunder in ***Thor #375*** . . . The first major "New Universe" crossover begins as Hysteria, Tantrum, and Scrunch premiere in ***Star Brand #4***, soon to return in ***D.P. 7*** . . . and the Muppet Babies end up in a super-hero world in ***Muppet Babies #11***. ●

Doctor Doom in *Cloak and Dagger*.



New Strange Tales combines two

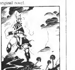
Before the year is out, Marvel will be combining two of its bi-monthly titles into the revived ***Strange Tales***, announced CARL POTTS, who edits the two "combined" series, ***Dr. Strange*** and ***Cloak and Dagger***, and will be editing ***Strange Tales***.

Cloak and Dagger #11 and ***Doctor Strange #81*** will be the final issues of these titles. Then each series will transfer into ***Strange Tales #1***, where they will begin running in 11-page chapters. BILL MANTLO, BRET BLEVINS, and TERRY AUSTIN will be the creators on ***Cloak and Dagger***, while PETER GILLIS and CHRIS WARNER continue to chronicle the exploits of Doctor Strange. ●

First Comics bits: Nexus fill-ins, Dynamo Joe

NEXUS SUBS: While STEVE RUDE is off pencilling the ***Mister Miracle*** one-shot for DC, ***Nexus*** will feature a series of guest pencillers: MIKE MIGNOLA in ***#28***, RICK VEITCH in ***#29***, and JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ in ***#30***.

NEW MOORCOCK SERIES: The Corum book is called ***The Chronicles of Corum***, the deluxe format book drawn by MIKE MIGNOLA and RICK BURCHETT. MIKE BARON is adapting from MICHAEL MOORCOCK's original novel.



As for ***Hawkmoon***, his second series is entitled ***The Mad God's Amulet*** and features the same creative staff as the first, with RICO RIVAL on inks. Both series premiere in late September, to be followed shortly thereafter by . . . ***Elric: Weird of the White Wolf***.

DYNAMO JOE EVERYWHERE: ***Dynamo Joe*** returns later this year in a new series scripted by PHIL FOGLIO, pencilled and plotted by creator DOUG RICE, and inked by Brian Thomas. First, however, he'll be the star of his own ***Dynamo Joe Special #1***, which reprints the character's appearances from ***Mars #10-12***, with eight pages of new material by JOHN OSTRANDER and DOUG RICE. The big lug nut will also end up in Cynosure for ***Grimjack #30***, by the same team. That issue also includes a "Munden's Bar" story starring STAN SAKAI's Usagi Yojimbo character.

When DJ gets his own comic, the back-up will be "The Cargonauts," a series chronicling the voyages of the freighter *Star of Milwaukee*.

Somewhat uniquely, the new ***Dynamo Joe*** series will start with ***#4***, picking up in numbering where the three-issue mini-series left off. ●

DC Miscellania: The new History

NEW HISTORY BEGINS: DC's rescheduled and re-formated ***History of the DC Universe*** is now slated to premiere in October. It will run for two ***Dark Knight***-format issues (cover price: $2.95) and is written by MARV WOLFMAN, pencilled by GEORGE PEREZ, and inked by KARL KESEL. DC promises that there will also be a deluxe edition to follow, and there will reportedly be a ***History of the DC Universe*** portfolio executed by a variety of different artists.

SPECIAL LEGION REPRINT: ***Tales of the Legion #343***, rather than reprinting the issue of the Baxter Legion that should logically follow, will be presenting a reprint of CARY BATES and DAVE COCKRUM's story from ***Superboy #195***, introducing Wildfire.

HAWK-A: TONY ISABELLA, writer of the ***Hawkman*** series, has initiated a "Hawkline" from 11 a.m. until noon every day, and will accept calls at (216) 696-0710 on the subject of that comic.

NEW TITLES: ***Cosmic Boy***, the first mini-series to spin off from ***Legends***, premieres in September. The series is written by PAUL LEVITZ and illustrated by KEITH GIFFEN and ERNIE COLON, and ships in the first week of September. Then, a week later, MATT WAGNER's new ***Demon*** premieres, inked by ART NICHOLS.

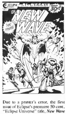
HEROES: This summer's ***Green Lantern Corps Annual #2*** features stories by ALAN MOORE and KEVIN (***Metalzoic***) O'NEILL, PAUL KUPPERBERG and TREVOR VON EEDEN, and STEVE ENGLEHART and JOE STATON; it ships in August . . . Bizarro is the villan of ***Man of Steel #5*** . . . Mlle. Marie returns in ***Sgt. Rock #413*** . . . The New Teen Titans guest in the first new issue of ***Action Comics***.

PEOPLE: BILL SIENKIEWICZ inks DENYS COWAN's pencils on the cover to the final issue of ***Blue Devil*** . . . DAN JURGENS is the penciller on ***The Outsiders #15*** . . . ***Batman #402-403*** is a two-part story written by MAX ALLAN COLLINS; the first half is drawn by JIM STARLIN, the second by DENYS COWAN.

ORIGINS: ***Secret Origins #9***

features the origin of Skyman by ROY THOMAS, TOM GRINDBERG, and GEORGE TUSKA, plus the origin of the original Flash . . . *Secret Origins #10* offers four different writers' interpretation of what the Phantom Stranger's origin might be: MIKE W. BARR, PAUL LEVITZ, DAN MISHKIN, and ALAN MOORE. The artists will be JIM APARO, ERNIE COLON, JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ, and GRAY MORROW. As if that weren't enough, that issue's a *Legends* crossover. ●

Printing error mars Eclipse's New Wave #1



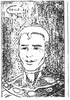
Due to a printer's error, the first issue of Eclipse's premiere 50-cent, "Eclipse Universe" title, *New Wave* was printed with two pages out of order.

By the time Eclipse editor Cat Yronwode realized that pages 2 and 7 of the story had been reversed, copies had already been shipped to distributors.

Eclipse will be reprinting the book in a corrected version. However, as a result of the delay, *New Wave's* schedule will slip back by two weeks on a permanent basis. Since the book is bi-weekly, that means *#2* will appear when *#3* was scheduled, etc.

Yronwode has requested that all copies of the "faulty" edition be destroyed, but suspects that some will be put on sale anyway. Any reader who gets a "bad" copy can send it to Eclipse and get a "good" one in return—unless he wants to keep it as a collector's item and get one of each. ●

Eclipse: New artists for Miracleman



MIRACLE SWITCH: New artist CHUCK BECKUM's reign on ALAN MOORE's *Miracleman* has been a short one, as he has left the title with *#9*. Beginning with *#11*, former *Swamp Thing* inker JOHN TOTLEBEN will become the regular artist, which RICK VEITCH was "the one" selected to fill in on issues *#9* and *#10*. Beckum is working on a new project for Slave Labor Graphics: *Lee Flea*.

PEOPLE: SCOTT HAMPTON makes an appearance in ***Tales of Terror #8*** with a shocker called "The Revenant." . . . JOHN BOLTON is the cover artist for ***ESPers #2*** . . . And ERIK LARSEN, late of Americomics, is the penciller on ***New DNAgents #13***

Dark Knight: DC schedules three book editions

For those who are missing an issue of FRANK MILLER's red-hot ***Dark Knight*** series (even after all the reprintings), fear not. DC will be reprinting the complete 200-page ***Dark Knight*** saga in not one, but three different formats.

First, during the summer, comes the previously-announced Graffiti-produced limited-edition hardcover selling for $39.95, each copy of which is signed by creators FRANK MILLER, KLAUS JANSON, and LYNN VARLEY.

Then, in October, comes the mass market hardback, retailing for $19.95, followed one month later by the trade paperback edition, which sells for $12.95. This latest edition will be distributed by Warner Books, by the way, a move that gives the book access to a lot of outlets that might otherwise not have carried it. ●

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We're getting better all the time!

THE 1986 KIRBY NOMINATIONS ARE OUT—

BEST NEW SERIES
—MIRACLEMAN
—MR. MONSTER
—SCOUT

BEST WRITER
—ALAN MOORE

BEST ARTIST
—P. CRAIG RUSSELL

BEST FINITE SERIES
—PELLEAS & MELISANDE

BEST GRAPHIC ALBUM
—ROCKETEER

BEST SINGLE ISSUE
—MIRACLEMAN #1

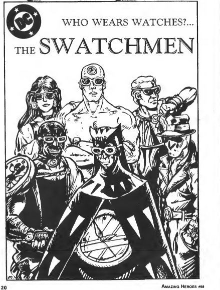
BEST SERIES
—MIRACLEMAN

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALAN DAVIS, MICHAEL T. GILBERT, GARRY LEACH, WILLIAM MESNER-LOEBS, ALAN MOORE, P. CRAIG RUSSELL, DAVE STEVENS AND TIMOTHY TRUMAN FROM...

ECLIPSE COMICS™

SILLY COVER

By Dave Mitchell



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coming DISTRACTIONS

JULY 1-15

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ **CEREBUS THE AARDVARK #88**
Story/Art/Cover . . . . . . **Dave Sim**
Backgrounds . . . . **Gerhard**
[$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships 7/15]

ARROW COMICS

☐ **THE REALM #3**
Alex, Dom and Silverfawn join up with the Diggoruss Gorey and launch an attack on Castle Darkoth.
Story . . . . **Griffith & Kerr**
Art . . . . **Davis & Dzon**
Cover . . . . **Sandy Schreiber**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

BLACKTHORNE

☐ **AMUSING STORIES #1**
"Blast"
Starring a self-proclaimed protector of the universe.
Story/Art . . . . . . **Don Dougherty**
"Urban Gorilla"
A different kind of crimefighter.
Story/Art . . . . **Scott Shaw!**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

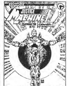
☐ **DICK TRACY MONTHLY #3**
Tracy wraps up the Mama and Jerome case and meets his next villain, Yogee Yamma.
All by . . . . **Chester Gould**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **HAMSTER VICE #2**
Hammy, Ben and Wolph face (hold your nose now) the Young Adult Hybrid Underwater Subnuclear Shaolin Snakefist Kung Fu Leather Spiders.
Story/Art . . . . . **Duane Ferguson**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

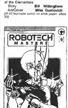
☐ **LAFFFIN' GAS #1**
A whole bunch of Teenage Mutant Ninja parodies (although one of them does hit ***American Flagg!*** at the same time). **Chin and Parsonovich** and **Lee Merra** are among the contributors.
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **STREET WOLF #1**
A new series that combines the realism of *Miami Vice* with the film noir style of the classic movies.
Story . . . . **Mark Wayne**
Art . . . . **Dennie Francie**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

COMICO



☐ **JUSTICE MACHINE AND THE ELEMENTALS #3**
Zarren orders the immediate execution of the Elementals.
Story . . . . **Bill Willingham**
Art/Cover . . . . . **Mike Gustovich**
[$1.50 four-color comic on white paper; ships 7/3]



☐ **ROBOTECH MASTERS #9**
All war and no play makes Dana a dull girl, so she and Bowie relax at a local nightclub, where Dana meets a singer who clouds her eyes with "Star Dust."
Story . . . . **Mike Baron**
Pencils . . . . **Neil Vokes**
Inks . . . . **Keith Wilson**
[$1.50 four-color comic on white paper; ships 7/2]

DC COMICS

☐ **ANGEL LOVE #4**
Angel feels no chemistry for her date, until he feels no chemistry for her.
Story/Art . . . . **Barbara Slate**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **BATMAN #401**
Magpie strikes again, but this time she's gone too far, snatching one of the Wayne jewels from under Batman's nose. A **Legends** tie-in.
Story . . . . **Barbara Randall**
Art/Cover . . . . **Trevor Von Eeden**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ **BLUE BEETLE #6**
The Beetle battles the Question and only one can survive!
Story . . . . **Len Wein**
Art/Cover . . . **Cullins & Patterson**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ **ELECTRIC WARRIOR #7**
Two major turning points: the fate of Lek 0-03 and the shame of Derek Two-Shadows.
Story . . . . **Doug Moench**
Art/Cover . . . . **Jim Baikie**
[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 5/20]

☐ **ELVIRA'S HOUSE OF MYSTERY #9**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ **FURY OF FIRESTORM #53**
Stein learns he has a fatal illness, and Firestorm meets his deadliest foe: Steel Shadow!
Story . . . . **Gerry Conway**
Art/Cover . . . . . **Joe Brozowski**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **G.I. COMBAT #287**
His son learns Sgt. Craig's innermost secret, which brings them closer together in routing the stubborn enemy.
Story . . . . **Robert Kanigher**
Art . . . . **Sam Glanzman**
Cover . . . . **Joe Kubert**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **HEX #15**
The Chain-Saw Killer is back for a

COMING

rematch, deadlier and more powerful than ever!

Story **Michael Fleisher**
Art/Cover **Giffen & Garzon**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #256

Who framed Martian Manhunter with a murder rap?

Story **Conway & DeMatteis**
Art/Cover **McDonnell & B.Smith**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #26

Star Boy returns to his home planet—and his stay may be longer than he expected.

Story **Paul Levitz**
Art **LaRocque & DeCarlo**
Cover **Steve Lightle**
[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 7/15]

☐ MAN OF STEEL #3

Batman and Superman for the first time!

Story/Pencils/Cover **John Byrne**
Inks **Dick Giordano**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ 'MAZING MAN #11

Maze and the gang head for Jones Beach and it's a hot time for everybody. Plus "Crisis on BC-Earth."

Story **Bob Rozakis**
Art **DeStefano & Kesel**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ THE OUTSIDERS #13

The Outsiders exchange one kind of prison for another—they're stranded on a desert island.

Story **Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover **Jim Aparo**
[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 7/8]

☐ ROOTS OF THE SWAMP THING #5

Reprint from ***Swamp Thing* #9** and **#10**. Plus the original Swamp Thing story by **Wein/Wrightson** from ***House of Mystery***!

Story **Len Wein**
Art/Cover **Berni Wrightson**
[$2.00 48-page color comic on white paper; ships 7/8]

☐ SECRET ORIGINS #8

The lowdown on Doll Man.

Story **Roy Thomas**
Art **Murphy Anderson**

Shadow Lass's career before the Legion.

Story **Paul Levitz**
Art **Tom Mandrake**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ SON OF AMBUSH BUG #5

Brought to trial, Ambush Bug throws himself on the mercy of the court—and misses!

Story **Giffen & Fleming**
Art/Cover **Giffen & Oksner**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ STAR TREK #32

Sabotage! It wasn't Kirk! It wasn't the Klingons! Who's out to destroy Maggie's world?

Story **Len Wein**
Art **Sutton & Villagran**
Cover **Brozowski & Smith**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS

☐ TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #71

Murder, mystery, and the spirit of a young girl haunt Nightwing's apartment. Reprints ***NTT* #12**.

Story **Marv Wolfman**
Pencils **Stan Woch**
Inks **Romeo Tanghal**
Cover **Beechum & Tanghal**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ TALES OF THE LEGION ANNUAL #4

A multi-chaptered, multi-layered murder mystery! Someone is killing the descendants of the JLA. Reprinting ***Legion Annual* #1**.

Story **Paul Levitz**
Pencils **Keith Giffen**
Inks **Kesel & Verioue**
Cover **Giffen & Kesel**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/7]

☐ VIGILANTE #35

Vigilante brings his holy war to church in a desperate effort to halt a bomber's career.

Story **Paul Kupperberg**
Art **Patton & Magyar**
Cover **John Byrne**
[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 7/8]

☐ WATCHMEN #3

Dr. Manhattan and the balance of power.

Story **Alan Moore**
Art/Cover **Dave Gibbons**
[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 7/8]

DARK HORSE COMICS

☐ DARK HORSE PRESENTS #1

Features work by **Chris Warner** and **Paul Chadwick**, among others.
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships 7/1]

DIMENSION GRAPHICS

☐ ELFTREK #1

Double parody time, as Captain Jirk and his crew meet Shredder and The Woof Riders.
[$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships 7/5]

ECLIPSE COMICS

ECLIPSE COMICS
NEW WAVE
50¢!

☐ ESPERS #1

Terrorists! The CIA! Beirut! Monte Carlo! Espers! What do they all have in common? It's all in this new series with art by "V for Vendetta's" **David Lloyd**.

Story **David Hudnall**
Art **David Lloyd**
[95¢ color comic; ships 7/8]

ECLIPSE
ESPERS

☐ THE NEW WAVE #3

"A Spacestation Named Hell"

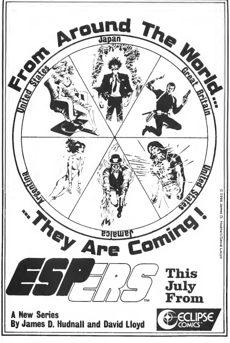
Story **Mindy Newell**
Pencils **Lee Weeks**
Inks **Ty Templeton**
[16-page 50¢ color comic; ships 7/8]

☐ SCOUT #9

"Rollin' and Tumblin'"

Scout stages a raid on a government compound, while the volatile situation in the Oval Office may explode any second.

Story/Art **Timothy Truman**
Plus "Airboy" by **John K. Snyder III, Chuck Dixon and Tom Yeates**
[$1.75 full-color comic on white paper; ships 7/1]



© 1986 James D. Hudnall/David Lloyd

☐ THE SPIRAL PATH #1

Two-part reprint of work from the defunct *Warrior*. It's the sorcerer Caed and his protege Bethbarr against the invasion of the undead totem-king.

Story/Art .... **Steve Parkhouse**

[$1.75 color comic on white paper; ships 7/1]

☐ TALES OF TERROR #7

"Remembering Rena"

Story .... **Steve Bissette**
Art .... **David Lloyd**

"Belated"

Story .... **Bruce Jones**
Art .... **John Bolton**

"D.W.I."

Story .... **Charles Dixon**
Art .... **Carol Lay**

"Video"

Story .... **Paul Alexander**
Art .... **Sam Kieth**
Cover .... **Joe Chiodo**

[$1.75 full-color comic on white paper; ships 7/1]

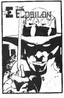
☐ TOR 3-D #1

Joe Kubert's original 3-D from the '50s!

All by .... **Joe Kubert**

[$2.50 direct sales 3-D comic; ships 7/1]

ELITE COMICS



☐ EPSILON WAVE #7

Arthur Williams travels to his hometown and Nightmare becomes a pawn in a series of murders.

Story/Inks .... **Tom Floyd**
Pencils .... **Chuck George**

[$1.75 color comic; ships in July]

☐ SEADRAGON #3

Seadragon must stop Fikor of Mu from launching an attack on the surface world.

Story/Pencils .... **Dennis Yee**
Inks .... **Butch Burcham**

[$1.75 color comic; ships in July]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK #4

Captain Jack and his crew must bring a reluctant (and very big) Commander Torment back to earth. Hijinks ensue.

All by .... **Mike Kazaleh**

[$2.00 black-and-white comic on white paper; ships in July]

☐ CRITTERS #6

The climactic conclusion of "Birthright"

Story/Art/Cover .... **Steve Gallacci**

"Usagi Yojimbo" confronts some rude patrons at a restaurant.

Story/Art .... **Stan Sakai**

And the premiere of a "Firecracker Jack" by *Peter Porker's* **Mark Armstrong**.

[$2.00 black-and-white comic on white paper; ships July]

☐ THREAT #6

In "Bob Mercenary" our hero checks his mail.

Story .... **Dave Harrison**
Art .... **Jay Geldhof**

"Zone"

The media start to move in on the Toxic monster of the Meadowlands.

Story/Art .... **M. Kraiger**

"Enigma Funnies"

The Western adventure comes to a blazing conclusion.

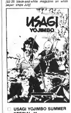
Story/Art/Cover .... **Gary Fields**

"The Holo Bros."

The Holo Bros. shoot it out with Herr Lippman.

Story/Art .... **Jim Rohn**

[$2.25 black-and-white magazine on white paper; ships July]



☐ USAGI YOJIMBO SUMMER SPECIAL #1

Reprints the impossible-to-find early stories from **Albedo** plus a brand new sequel, plus a pin-up by **Sergio Aragones**.

All by .... **Stan Sakai**

[48-page $2.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

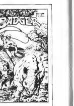
FIRST COMICS

☐ ALTER EGO #4

The final confrontation between Alter Ego and the Crimson Claw.

Story .... **Roy Thomas**
Art/Cover .... **Harris & Burchett**

[$1.25 Mando color comic; ships 7/3]



☐ THE BADGER #17

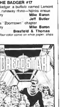
The Badger, a buffalo named Lamont and a runaway rhino—hijinks ensue.

Story .... **Mike Baron**
Art .... **Jeff Butler**

Plus a "Zoomtown" chapter

Story .... **Mike Baron**
Art .... **Bresfield & Thomas**

[$1.75 four-color comic on white paper; ships 6/27]



☐ DREADSTAR #27

Dreadstar makes his First debut and reveals the identity of the traitor.

All by .... **Jim Starlin**

[$1.75 direct sales color comic; ships 6/27]

☐ GRIMJACK #28

Gaunt and BlacJac travel "Across the Chasm," back to their younger days when they fought in the arena.

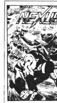
Story .... **John Ostrander**
Art/Cover .... **Sutton & Guinen**

Plus a Mundan's Bar story by the team of **John Ostrander, Del Close** and **Hilary Barta**.

[$1.25 Mando color comic; ships 7/3]

☐ NEXUS #26

Horatio encounters the ultimate killing machine—"Clayborn."



Story .... **Mike Baron**
Art/ .... **Rude & Nyberg**

[$1.75 full-color comic on white paper; ships 6/27]

GLADSTONE COMICS

☐ DONALD DUCK #247

A Grandma Duck story by **Carl Barks**, plus more stories from Germany and Denmark.

Cover .... **Daan Jippes**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/6]

☐ MICKEY MOUSE #220

"Mickey and the Seven Ghosts" Part two.

Story/Art .... **Floyd Gottfredson**
Cover .... **Daan Jippes**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/6]

☐ UNCLE SCROOGE #211

"The Prize of Pizarro"

Story/Art .... **Carl Barks**
Cover .... **Daan Jippes**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/6]

☐ WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES #512

"Mystery of the Vanishing Railroad" Part Two.

Story/Art .... **Paul Murry**

Plus a Donald Duck story by **Daan Jippes**, a Gyro Gearloose story by **Carl Barks**, and a Wuzzles story.

Cover .... **Daan Jippes**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/15; newsstand o/s 8/6]

KITCHEN SINK

☐ BORDER WORLDS #1

Donald Simpson of *Megaton Man* fame kicks off his new sci-fi series.

All by .... **Donald Simpson**

[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships mid-July]

☐ THE SPIRIT #21

Reprinting four more classic Spirit stories in black-and-white, including "Showdown with the Octopus" and "Blind."

All by .... **Will Eisner**

[$1.95 black-and-white comic on white paper; ships in mid-July]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ ALPHA FLIGHT #40

The marriage of Sub-Mariner and Marrina.

Story .... **Bill Mantlo**
Art .... **Ross & Talaoc**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ AMAZING HIGH ADVENTURE #4

"The Golden Eagle" by **Zelenetz** and **Bolton**, "Saunan Remains" by **Perry** and **Bissette**, "The Door" by **Mantlo** and **J. Severin**.

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #282

Guest stars X-Factor.

Story .... **Tom DeFalco**
Art/Cover .... **Frenz/Breeding**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #321

Introduces a new bad guy: The Super Patriot. This issue ties in with the 4th of July Statue of Liberty celebration.

Story .... **Mark Gruenwald**
Art .... **Neary & Beatty**
Cover .... **Zeck & Rubinstein**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ CLOAK AND DAGGER #10

Art Adams pencils as C & D head into W. Germany.

Story .... **Bill Mantlo**
Art .... **Adams & Austin**

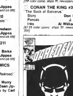
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ CONAN THE KING #37

"The Sack of Balvarus"

Story .... **Don Kraar**
Pencils .... **J. Hunt**
Inks .... **Al Williamson**

[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/31]



☐ DAREDEVIL #236

Barry Windsor-Smith is the guest artist. The Black Widow returns.

Story .... **Ann Nocenti**
Art/Cover .... **Barry Windsor-Smith**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ FANTASTIC FOUR INDEX #12

Indexing issues 181-200.

Editor .... **George Olshevsky**

[$1.25 Mando color comic; ships 5/13]

☐ LABYRINTH #1

Tie in with Jim Henson movie starring David Bowie.

Story .... **Sid Jacobson**
Art/Cover .... **J. Buscema/Tanghal**

[68-page $2.50 four-color magazine on white paper; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ MERC #1

New Universe title. Introducing Mark Hazard, a soldier of fortune.

Story .... **Peter David**
Art .... **Gray Morrow**

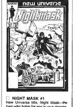
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ NEW MUTANTS #45

Deals with the repercussions of X-Factor's "Get the Mutants" campaign.

Story .... **Chris Claremont**
Art .... **Guice & Baker**
Cover .... **Barry Windsor-Smith**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]



☐ NIGHT MASK #1

New Universe title. Night Mask—the hero who fights for you in your dreams.

Story .... **Archie Goodwin**
Art .... **Tony Salmons**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #12

Text .... **Sanderson & Gruenwald**
Art .... **Various**

[$1.50 color comic on white paper; ships 5/13; newsstand o/s 6/5]

☐ PSI FORCE #1

New Universe title. Three teenaged runaways with tremendous psychic powers try to escape the many forces that would like to exploit them.

Story .... **Steve Perry**
Art .... **Mark Texeira**

[75¢ color comic; ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #129

Story .... **Don Kraar**
Art .... **Docherty/Nebres**
Cover .... **Joe Jusko**

[$1.50 black-and-white magazine; ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #20

Spider-Man battles terrorists in London.

Story .... **David Michelinie**

WOMP
GOT YA!
KRASH

HAVEN'T YOU GOTTEN ULTRA KLUTZ YET?

ONWARD
OC
COMICS

According to our sales, you have. But don't be content with just the first issue. This series will do everything but the predictable in future issues. ULTRA KLUTZ goes monthly with issue #2, on sale in September. It's the book to get.

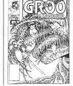
ONWARD COMICS • P.O. Box 3684 Chico CA 95927 • (916) 893-2607

Art .... **Mark Silvestri**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS #14**
The return of Daimon Hellstrom and Hellcat.
Story .... **Steve Englehart**
Art/Cover .... **Milgrom & Sinnott**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

☐ **BOZZ CHRONICLES #5**
Bozz and Mandy square off against a madman with African powers (whatever that means).
Story .... **David Michelinie**
Art .... **Bret Blevins**
[$1.50 four-color comic on white paper: ships 7/8]



☐ **GROO THE WANDERER #21**
More Derring-do and Derring-don't with Groo.
All by .... **Sergio Aragones**
Not to mention .... **Mark Evanier**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **SWASHBUCKLERS #10**
Colleen Doran of *A Distant Soil* pencils this story about the Swashbucklers searching for an ancient mapmaker.
Story .... **Bill Mantlo**
Art .... **Doran & Villemonte**
Cover .... **Colleen Doran**
[$1.50 four-color comic on white paper: ships 7/1]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

☐ **EWOKS #10**
Conclusion of "Lost in Time," the 2-part Droids-Ewoks crossover.
Story .... **Dave Manak**
Art .... **Romita & Kremer**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **HEATHCLIFF #12**
Heathcliff is captured by two aliens.
Story .... **Angelo DeCesare**
Art .... **Kremer & Roettcher**
Cover .... **Warren Kremer**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/8; newsstand o/s 7/31]

☐ **HE-MAN AND THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE #4**
New "Masters" characters, Rio-Blast, Snout Sprout, King Hiss, Tung Lashor and Rattlor, are introduced.
Story .... **Mike Carlin**
Art .... **Wilson & Janke**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

☐ **PETER PORKER #12**
"The Goudy, The Bad and The Ugly"
(previously announced for #11)
Story .... **Steve Skeates**
Art .... **Albelo & Fournier**
[75¢ color comic: ships 7/1; newsstand o/s 7/24]

OCEAN COMICS

☐ **STREETFIGHTER #1**
Introduces a modern-day crusader who takes on the mob.
Story .... **Ron Fortier**
Art .... **Kato/Seppi/McFarlane**
Cover .... **Kato & McFarlane**
[$1.75 color comic: ships in July]

RENEGADE PRESS

☐ **DITKO'S WORLD #3**
Features Static and The Question (but not in the same story).
[$1.70 black-and-white comic: ships 7/11]

☐ **MS. TREE #31**
Lock out—Ms. Tree is once again armed and dangerous.
Story .... **Max Collins**
Art .... **Terry Beatty**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic: ships 7/11]

☐ **STRATA #4**
All swashbuckling issue. Flambeau's commando team runs wild in the Iron City.
Story .... **Joe Judt**
Art .... **Murtagh & Brozman**
[$1.70 black-and-white comic: ships 7/11]

THOUGHTS & IMAGES

☐ **COMMAND REVIEW #1**
The first four episodes of "Erma Felna EDF" reprinted from ***Albedo, Anthropomorphics***.
[60 page $4.00 black-and-white comic: ships in July]

☐ **ZELL, SWORDDANCER #1**
Zell, apprentice dancer, dreams of one day owning her own blade and performing beyond her remote village.
Story/Art .... **Steven A. Gallacci**
With .... **Steve Adams**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic: ships in July]

VICTORY PUBLICATIONS

☐ **SHURIKEN #5**
Kyoko attempts to leave the Organization!
Story/Art .... **Reggie Byers**
Inks .... **Michio Okamura**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic: ships in July]

NEXT ISSUE:

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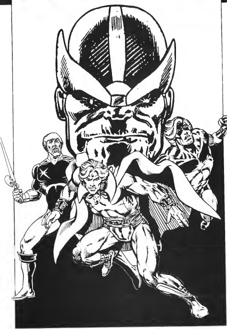
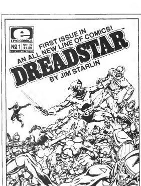


JIM STARLIN

When you look up "space-spanning psychodrama" in the dictionary, they have a picture of Jim Starlin. The creator, the master, and the only practitioner of this singular genre, Starlin began his career at Marvel in the early '70s with Captain Marvel. *Early in his stint on that series as an artist he took over the writing chores and quickly established the trademarks of the Starlin style: characters that embodied psychological concepts (Eros and Thanos—derived from thanatos, the death urge), the fascination with death; the starscapes; the fight-scene-as-psychic-turmoil. You have to remember that this was back before Byrne, Miller or Simonson, when writer/artists were in short supply. Moving from the cosmic consciousness of* Captain Marvel *to the stellar angst of* Warlock, *Starlin created one of his most memorable series. The main character was a "suicidal paranoid," the villain was a darker, earlier version of the hero, the sidekick was an utterly decadent troll, the love interest was "the deadliest (and greenest) woman in the galaxy," and the aforementioned Thanos was an uneasy ally. It was a twisted little tale. Before he left Marvel he took the time to create (with Steve Englehart) Shang Chi, Master of Kung Fu. At Warren he created the character Darklon, a gloomy one-eyed magician with a Prince Valiant hairdo and an Oedipal conflict. (This work was collected and reprinted as a Pacific one-shot). He later came back to Marvel to do the* Death of Captain Marvel *graphic novel, where he worked out the emotional trauma of his father's own death by cancer. The character Vanth Dreadstar (who sports a beard suspiciously like that of his creator) was first introduced in "Metamarphosis Odyssey" which ran in* Epic *magazine. Soon after,* Dreadstar *became the first comic in the Epic line. Now, after almost 30 issues with Epic,* Dreadstar *is moving to First and I thought it would be a good time to check in with Mr. Starlin. This interview was conducted in late May and transcribed by —David Smay*

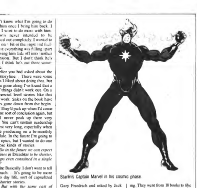


Marvel's first creator-owned Epic Comics title has now become the first to defect to another company. Why? Bookkeeping . . .

Amazing Heroes: *Why is* Dreadstar *moving from Epic to First?*
Jim Starlin: Because I can't work with Marvel any more. I've had a lot of trouble getting paid anywhere near on time. Sometimes I've had to wait as long as three to four months on checks. I'm of the opinion at this point, though people up at Marvel deny it, that Marvel is less than enthusiastic about continuing creator owned characters and wouldn't be sad to see them all go.
AH: *Would that mean the end of the Epic line?*
Starlin: Well, they're still hanging in there. Despite the fact that Carl Potts is also having trouble along these same lines, he continues to do *Alien Legion*. I understand *Groo* does pretty well up there. Other than that, I really don't know what the fate of the Epic line is.
AH: *Did you have any problems with editorial interference?*
Starlin: No. I got along famously with Jo Duffy and Archie [Goodwin]. I had no complaints there. In fact, Archie is really the only person up there who went out on a limb at all trying to correct the situation with my checks. He was a doll about the whole thing, he and Jo both. But they had no control over bookkeeping, so nothing could be done about it.
AH: *Looking back over the Epic run of* Dreadstar, *what would you say were your most successful issues?*
Starlin: I'm not happy with a number of the later issues—from about #15 to #20. I was going crazy dealing with the business part of it, trying to get paid; I wasn't really happy with a lot of the stuff during that period. I'm happier with some of the earlier issues, particularly the first five or six. I'm getting more into it again now. Despite all the warnings—everybody said I'd have trouble getting paid at First—I've had no trouble. I get a check from them every week, which works out just fine. They've never been late once and I've been having fun with the book again. Which I wasn't quite sure I'd be able to do again.
AH: *Did you ever consider dropping the book entirely and starting something else?*
Starlin: Well, I'm considering, down the line somewhere, getting rid of the art part of it. I'm leaning more toward writing these days. I'm feeling more comfortable with it. I've never been an illustrator. I'm not like Berni Wrightson or Jeff Jones, doing beautiful pieces of artwork. I'm a storyteller. More and more as I go along I find I'm feeling less comfortable with the art and more comfortable with telling stories, the writing part of it.
AH: *Let's talk about the advantages/disadvantages of working with a very long storyline. Is the whole Instrumentality/Monarchy storyline coming to a conclusion or is this going to be something that goes on for a while?*
Starlin: No, it ends with issue #29. At the end of it not only is the Instrumentality taken care of but so is Dreadstar in a very dramatic way. Between issue #29 and #30 two years will elapse. So when we finally get back to this universe that Dreadstar lives in, it'll be a whole different place. Dreadstar will be a whole different person too, for that matter.
AH: *Are you going to explore a romantic relationship between Vanth and Willow?*
Starlin: Not really, because it's not a really healthy relationship to begin with. Vanth dug her because she looked like his ex-wife Delilah, at first. As he's been going along he's been denying himself, wanting to get away from that. Willow, which has never been stated, has always liked Vanth because he reminds her of her father. They look a lot alike. I want to eventually bring back Dr. Delphi. Dr. Delphi would be Willow's love interest somewhere in the future.
AH: *I thought he was disintegrated?*
Starlin: He's not in this dimension.

I don't know what I'm going to do with him once I bring him back. I know I want to do more with him. He was never intended to be knocked out completely. I wanted to carry on a bit of the angst and feeling that everything was falling apart by having him fade off into another dimension. But I don't think he's dead. I think he's out there somewhere.

Earlier you had asked about the long storyline . . . There were some things I liked about doing that, but as I've gone along I've found that a lot of things didn't work out. On a commercial level stories like that don't work. Sales on the book have always gone down from the beginning. They'd pick up when I'd come to some sort of conclusion again, but they'd never peak up there very high. You can't sustain readership interest very long, especially when you're producing on a bi-monthly schedule. In the future I'm going to avoid epics, but I wanted to do one of those kinds of stories.
AH: *So in the future we can expect storylines in* Dreadstar *to be shorter, perhaps even contained in a single issue?*
Starlin: Basically. I don't want to tell too much . . . It's going to be more day to day life, sort of capsulized into shorter stories.
AH: *But with the same cast of characters?*
Starlin: Those who survive. It's the end of a war. We're going to lose a few people along the way.
AH: *It seems like there's a line from characters like Pip and Thanos to characters like Skeevo and Lord Papal. I was wondering if you ever regretted killing off those original characters?*
Starlin: Skeevo is a direct descendant of Pip. In fact, when I first started up on this I tried to talk to Marvel about maybe buying Pip from them. They didn't think it was such a hot idea. I'm sure they'll never do anything with Pip but they kind of shied away from selling him. So I needed some kind of comedy interest. Originally Oedi was going to be the comedy interest. He was going to be kind of a wise-cracking animal character. He progressed into something completely different so Skeevo had to be created to fill a void that Oedi didn't quite fill up.
AH: *Was* Captain Marvel *your first work for Marvel?*
Starlin: First, I did fill-in issues. I did a couple fill-in issues of *Iron Man*, one of which tied into *Captain Marvel* later. Before that there was a love story that was written by



Starlin's Captain Marvel in his cosmic phase.

Gary Friedrich and inked by Jack Abel and a horror story—I don't remember who wrote that, but it was inked by Mike Ploog and nobody could've told it was mine by the time Mike got done with it.
AH: *You started on* Captain Marvel *just as the artist and gradually took over the storytelling reins as well. How did that transition occur?*
Starlin: Well, Mike and I—Mike Friedrich, who scripted the original issues in that [series]—we started off on it together but I always did the plotting. Mike had five books at the time so it was very easy to do. As we got on, Mike and I had cross ideas on what the characters should be. Because Mike had a good workload at that time we talked it over and thought, "Well, let's take a chance and have me write a segment of the story." We had one story split into three parts. It worked out, so I just started writing it.
AH: *At the time it seemed like you had control over the coloring on the book. In fact, it seemed like you were basically given free rein on* Captain Marvel. *Is that how it was?*
Starlin: They pretty much let me run. At the time they were expanding. They went from 18 books to like 48 books within two years' time. So no one had control of anything at that point. Roy Thomas was the editor and tried to read everything, but it just wasn't humanly possible. Roy just let us go with what we had. I usually colored the book because I had time for it then and nobody stopped me. A lot of the things that happened in those books was just because nobody stopped us.
AH: *Do you think you could do that book today at Marvel as a regular mainstream book?*
Starlin: From what I hear, no. For one thing . . . Well, the *Captain Marvel* book, probably, because we used a lot of guest stars. It was my first book and we wanted it to sell. So we used a lot of guest stars and did a lot of things that were commercial. There were big fights. There was some spaciness in there, but mostly we were trying to make it commercial. Later on we did *Warlock* and we didn't worry about it being commercial. As a result it only lasted six issues, of course. I could probably get away with *Captain Marvel* today but *Warlock* I wouldn't have been able to.
AH: *What interested you in the*

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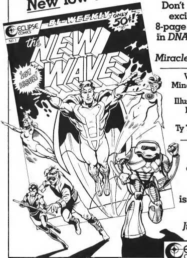

ECLIPSE COMICS

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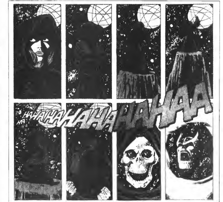

Warlock character originally?

Starlin: He was in outer space. That was the main reason. It was either the Silver Surfer or Warlock, and at the time Stan didn't want anyone touching the Silver Surfer. [Warlock] was a good looking character. Gil Kane had designed a great looking costume for him. I'm not sure exactly what else attracted me at the time. I knew that we weren't going to do any of the Jesus Christ things that they did with him. That was Gil Kane and Roy Thomas's version. I guess somewhere along the line I decided that with Captain Marvel I'd taken a warrior and made a god out of him and the idea of taking the god and making him back into a human being with Warlock appealed to me.

AH: *How was it following Gil Kane on your first two books?*

Starlin: It was kind of intimidating. I mean the man has his structure down so well. It didn't really occur to me until I actually got into the first issue. The first issue of *Warlock* has some things that I just swiped cold from Gil. Just to get the feel of how the character would move. It also taught me that I didn't want to do the character the way he looked at that point. I guess that's why in the third issue we changed the costume.

AH: *Would you have killed off Warlock as a character if you didn't know the series was going to be cancelled?*

Starlin: He sort of went in that direction all by himself. Basically, the series is about a paranoid. A suicidal paranoid. By the time I did the fifth or sixth issue, where we ended the Magus series and Warlock came back and destroyed himself, that character could logically do nothing but self-destruct. It was only a matter of time.

AH: *It seemed like you didn't do as much with the character Gamora as you wanted. I mean, you introduced this really interesting character into the series and before you had a chance to develop her, pffft. I was wondering what you had originally intended to do with her?*

Starlin: Well, there's an entire issue of *Warlock*—I guess actually it was half an issue—that I had laid out where she was supposed to be captured by the Destroyer. Things didn't work out with Marvel too well at that point and I quit. So there's a lot of that story that never quite got settled. There's a whole bit with the High Evolutionary—Warlock was supposed to destroy the High Evolutionary in my storyline because the High Evolutionary had destroyed Counter-Earth. I did that in an issue which they changed at the office after it had been drawn and everything. I guess it's the issue where he comes back and he's gigantic. In the book it shows him looking at a little piece of debris in space and he talks about going back to Counter Earth

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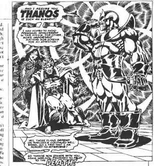
or something. In the version I did, he looks at the piece of debris and that's all that's left of Counter-Earth; he was going to go after the High Evolutionary [then]. But at that point they started to notice what we were doing with *Warlock* and a lot of things got changed and we didn't stick with the book.

AH: *I was going to ask you about the clown issue. A lot of people have interpreted that as a satire of your relationship with Marvel. Is that a fair interpretation?*

Starlin: Yes. At that particular time, yes.

AH: *You and Steve Englehart created Shang-Chi, Master of Kung-Fu. How did it feel to create a character and then watch two other people run off with that character and have a big success with it?*

Starlin: To tell the truth, I didn't read the book much after we got off it. As much fun as I had working with Englehart on the book, the actual book that we ended up creating was not what we set out to do. Originally we wanted to do the *Kung Fu* series that was on television at the time. But that was a Warner Bros. production so we couldn't get the rights to it. Warner Bros. owned DC and it just wasn't going to happen. So we started creating this character and somewhere along the line Fu Manchu got grafted onto it, despite Englehart's and my objections. I never really liked the character. I don't think Steve did either, but you'd have to check with him on that one. [Fu Manchu] got onto it and I wasn't comfortable because Fu Manchu was always sort of a racist character. As we were designing the character I did up several oriental faces for Shang Chi. I also did costume designs and on the costume designs there was just a generic face—a generic super-hero face to fill in the features. When Stan saw the figures he rejected all the oriental faces and wanted to go with the generic super-hero face we had on the character. This put us in the position of having an occidental face on an oriental character. So he became half occidental, half oriental. By the time we finally got done with it I had a friend who was oriental who looked at it—he told me flat out he found the whole thing insulting. That was enough for me. Things hadn't been going right on the book on my end of it at least. Like I said, Steve was having a good time with the writing part of it. A lot of things that were coming from my end I wasn't really happy with. As a result


...AND I ASSURE YOU THANOS IS SUCH AN ELEMENT!
I HAD HOPED TO AVOID PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THIS AFFAIR, FOR OTHER, MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS NOW SCREAM FOR MY ATTENTION!
YET, THOSE PLANS DEPEND ON WARLOCK'S CONTINUED WELL-BEING, SO I FIND THAT I AM FORCED TO INTERVENE!
SO THANOS NOW STANDS WITH YOU, ADAM WARLOCK, PREPARED TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH!

I got off the book. I understand that Doug [Moench] and Paul Gulacy did a tremendous job on it but I just couldn't read it. I just stayed away from it.

AH: *You've mentioned in passing that you had problems on the* Warlock *storyline and again with* MOKF. *Do you want to talk about why you left Marvel the first time?*

Starlin: Well, the first time it was mostly editorial. They wanted me to work for them, so they agreed that there were some things that they were supposed to leave us alone on. At that point, it seemed like we had a different editor almost every other week. During the time I was on *Warlock* we had Roy Thomas, Len Wein, Gerry Conway, Marv Wolfman and finally Jim Shooter—Archie Goodwin, excuse me. Jim Shooter didn't make it 'til later. I would get assurances from one editor that they were going to leave me alone on the book and go whichever way I wanted. A week later we'd have another editor in the office and this editor didn't like the book and wanted all sorts of things changed. They would change things on issues that had gone through already and I thought were complete, which would mess up storylines that I was working on ahead of time. It just became frustrating. I didn't need it.

AH: *But you were lured back to Marvel when you did "Metamorphosis Odyssey" for* Epic?

Starlin: Yeah, that was a whole different trip then. We'd had a whole lot of things going on with the [Comics] Guild, which we tried to form out of ACBA. There was a lot of bad feelings about work for hire at that point. This was a way of coming back and having control over the characters and that was nice. You know, *Dreadstar* was my baby. It worked out there quite nicely for a while. Like I said, I had no trouble editorially there. I would have probably stuck with *Dreadstar* for Epic for a long time if it hadn't been for the stuff with the bookkeeping.

AH: *Would you ever consider working for Marvel or DC again on a work-for-hire basis?*

Starlin: As a matter of fact, I have two pages left on a *Batman* story that I'm inking—quite a nice little story. I got behind on my taxes this year and had to get some money up quick so I called Denny O'Neil and asked him if he had a Batman story he wanted done. He said he had a job by Max Collins. Most of the time when you call up and say "Gimme a story" you're liable to get the worst garbage ever written. Because they'll pull something out of a dresser drawer and say, "We've been looking for somebody to draw this for a lo-o-ong time," and you get stuck with it. That's what I expected with this story. I was really pleasantly surprised when Max Collins gave me this wonderful story that I've just

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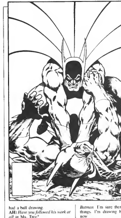


had a ball drawing.

AH: *Have you followed his work at all in* Ms. Tree?

Starlin: Occasionally. I used to get his books from . . . Renegade Press?

AH: *Yeah.*

Starlin: I guess they're Renegade Press now. When they shifted over to the new publisher I stopped getting them and I haven't seen them since. I don't live near a comic book shop. I live up in the mountains. I get to a comic book shop like once maybe every six months.

AH: *So what comics do you follow when you do get down to a comics shop?*

Starlin: I get the bundles from Marvel and DC on an irregular basis. The books that I follow . . . I like *Swamp Thing* quite a bit. I'm getting all the First books now. I like *Nexus* an awful lot. *Grimjack's* quite fun. I rather enjoyed that *Deadman* series that DC put out just recently. Jose Luis Garcia Lopez is a favorite of mine. Uhm. what's out right now that I like? I'm enjoying Miller's *Batman*. I'm sure there are other things. I'm drawing blanks right now.

AH: *If we can back up a bit, when you were first starting in comics, who were your idols and influences?*

Starlin: Oh, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and Joe Kubert. Those were the guys that I thought were the hottest.

AH: *Have you been keeping abreast of the whole Kirby art controversy? Have you had any trouble getting your art back?*

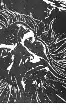
Starlin: No, before they gave art back I used to steal mine back. [Since then], they've given me a couple covers that I didn't get back. I knew where they stuck it so I went and got my own stuff before anyone sent it off to the warehouse. There are a few pages here and there that I didn't get back. I didn't have any trouble and I think the whole thing that Marvel is doing with Kirby is just outrageous. I can't believe these people who, for all intents and purposes, are living off Jack's heritage are being so mean-spirited to him now. I mean, this is a guy they should be doing hosannahs to. They should be giving him an annuity to live on for what he did for that company and instead they're trying to rip him off with his artwork. I just think it's horrible. I've got to really hand it to folks like Miller and . . . oh, *The Comics Journal*, for the work they're doing. I'm trying to help them on this.

AH: *There's another series you did a while back,* Darklon. *Is that a character that you feel like you're going to pick up again or are you done with him?*

Starlin: As a matter of fact, Darklon does play in the future of *Dreadstar* in an indirect way. Darklon was a character I did for Warren. It was just after *Warlock*. I was at a point where I wanted to play around with magic markers and some mixed media. He was just sort of a fun guy to do for a while. He was this magician who gave me a chance to do some darker stuff than I couldn't have done up at Marvel. He wasn't a very nice person. It gave me a chance to do this little Oedipus Rex thing I had floating in my head at the time. He was a fun character—like I said, he plays an indirect part in the future of *Dreadstar*. Nothing that I want to talk about at this point, especially seeing as how he's actually owned by Warren. He figures in sort of the way that Superman fits in at the back of the *Death of Captain Marvel* book.

AH: *How was it working at Warren?*

A Jim Starlin illustration from the 1983 *Nebula Maker and Four Encounters* volume published by Dodd, Mead, & Co.



SHE WILL LEAD US ON OUR JOURNEY
SHE WILL SHOW US THAT THIS IS NOT THE END...
ONLY THE BEGINNING!

Starlin: I didn't have too much trouble there. Weezie [Louise] Jones, uhm, Simonson was the editor up there at the time. She was no trouble at all. I had one job where I had a hard time getting it lettered but other than that it was quite fun. She enjoyed *Darklon* and it was a good trip.

AH: *Do you want to address the rap that Jim Starlin has a death fixation? That, if you want to kill off a character, give it to Starlin?*

Starlin: [*laughs*] Well, as a matter of fact, when Denny was finishing off the *Master of Kung Fu* book they called me up and asked me if I wanted to kill Shang Chi off. I gave it a pass because it was directly after *The Death of Captain Marvel.* You're asking me why I do death?

YES... IT'S TRUE! I CAN AT LAST FEEL THEM.
THERE'S AUTOLYCUS... KRA-TOR... THE BLACK KNIGHTS... WHISP'R... EVEN PART OF THE STAR THIEF... AND MANY OTHERS FROM BEFORE MY TIME.
THEY'RE... WE'RE ALL HERE TOGETHER... TRULY TOGETHER. FOR OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN BOOKS, AND THIS ATMOSPHERE BREEDS UNDERSTANDING AND MUTES THE EGO.
HERE WE ARE ALL ONE AND IN THIS ONENESS THERE CAN ONLY BE...
LOVE

AH: *Actually, I was wondering if you were tired of hearing that or if it was a theme that you thought wasn't handled particularly well or often enough in comics. Certainly it's come into vogue since the days when you were working for mainstream Marvel titles. It seems to be used these days to pick up sales on a book. I just wondered if you had any thoughts on the subject.*

Starlin: Despite the fact that some folks have accused me of killing somebody off to hype up sales, I've never done that. Captain Marvel was going to die anyhow; they asked me to do it. I didn't have any ideas at first, it came to me later on. My father was dying of cancer. This worked out as a good way... a therapy to work it out of my system.

I mean, you've got these guys running around in their underwear playing all these cosmic games. I can't believe that more of them, if there was any reality to this situation, wouldn't die. It's the ultimate game—death. It's the one thing you own... No, I take that back. There's two things you own that are as ephemeral as the wind. That's your sanity and your life. What better stakes to play for? I mean, it's nice to stop a bank robber but it's not as exciting as playing with your life or your sanity. The two things that you can lose at the throw of a dice. They're the two things that you have the least control of in your life.

AH: *In the* Warlock *series you had* Warlock *go insane. Do you really feel like the character went crazy, that he went over the edge?*

Starlin: I think he was always insane. You can't get staked up to a cross and not be a little bit crazy. I always pictured [the series] as a little surrealistic trip through the nightmare of his brain. I, in my own head, don't know if that stuff actually happened. In fact it's gotten even cloudier because Mark Gruenwald did some stories in the *Thing* book later on that tied into the *Warlock* series which said that some of these things never happened. It could be that *Warlock* never happened. Warlock may be floating around there catatonic, sitting on top of a rock somewhere out there.

AH: *Are there other genres you're interested in doing besides cosmic, space opera stuff? Would you ever do a western, for example?*

Starlin: Someday. As I said, I'm having a harder time sitting down to draw. A western would be fun. If I wanted to draw something different it might be a western. I'm also getting fascinated by horror of late—I've been hanging out with Berni Wrightson a little bit too much. My wife and I have written a screenplay. It's a horror/science fiction affair. We've sent it out and this director is reading it. I don't know if anything will ever come of it but it may be a new direction we're going in.

AH: *Does writing a screenplay seem like a natural direction after working in comics?*

Starlin: Quite a bit. Working in comic books you become very visual. Plus it seems like there's a really good chance to tell stories in movies right now. There's a whole lot of different kinds of movies being made now. And from everyone I've talked to, they want writers who are visually oriented in their writing. It seems like it might be a good chance. I'm going to take a shot at it.

AH: *You mentioned that you might just be writing* Dreadstar...

Starlin: In the future. I'm committed contractually for at least six issues at First for the drawing part.

AH: *Well, let's do a dream scenario here. If you could get anybody in the business to draw* Dreadstar, *who would you choose?*

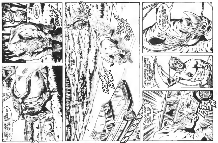
Starlin: Well, I haven't given it any thought. Neal Adams, Joe Kubert, Frank Miller. I mean, take your pick. But being more realistic it would probably be somebody who was just starting off in the business who has a lot of promise when the time comes. In this business people jump around so much that someone who might be interested in it this week, by the time I got around to getting off the book they'd have two years worth of commitments under their belt by then. It's more or less something that, when the time comes we'll have to start looking.

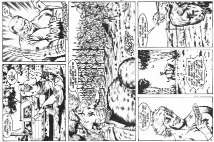
AH: *Are there any other projects you want to talk about?*

Starlin: Well, I wrote a graphic novel for Berni Wrightson, which he's working on right now. It's a funny little piece of fluff that should take about 15 minutes to read and should be quite enjoyable. Other than that it's just that *Batman* story and *Dreadstar* as usual. ●

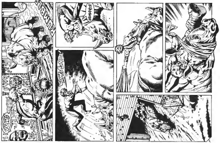
FIRSTLOOK

Jeffrey Butler, the co-creator and original artist of First Comics' *The Badger*, returns to the series for one issue this month. In ***The Badger #17***, comics' baddest super-hero takes up with a buffalo to hunt down a renegade rhino (*The sneak preview is continued from the last issue* of Amazing Heroes.)


GRUNT
HONK HONK HONK



BADGER™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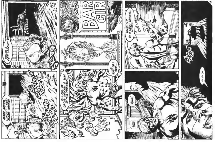
YOWL
RUMBLE RUMBLE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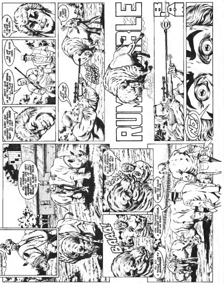
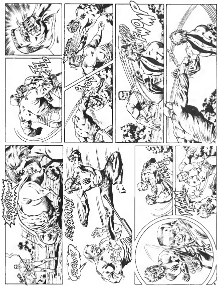
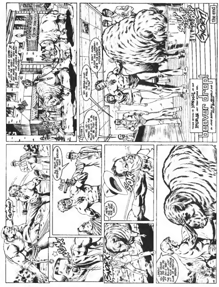
CIR
OH OH OH


I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU THE HORN
JUST HOLD THAT BUFFALO.
RUMBLE
NO!
BAAA!


WHOMP
GRRRRrrrr
EEEYAAAHH!
WHOOF!
WHAM

BADGER

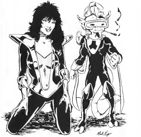


A ONE-ISSUE MICRO-SERIES —
NEW FROM THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS TEAM!

Pansafredicapacag — or **FRED** for short (which he is). He'll "acquire" anything from anywhen for you—IF the price is right.

BIANCA — Fred's partner. She's never met a lock she couldn't pick (except the ones on Fred's house).

Transformers? **Ho!** Go Bots? **Bah!** The **FREDMOBILE** beats them all! It's a sleek FTL car that can turn into ANYTHING (not to mention travel through space and time)!



Fred and Bianca aren't without **enemies**, however—not one not two but **three** separate agencies want them!

The **INTERPOL** (Interstellar Police) agent wants them—regardless of consequences Rambo would idolize this guy!

The **I.R.S.** (Interstellar Revenue Service) agent wants them: they haven't paid one thin credit of taxes on their ill gotten gains!

The **REPO MAN** wants them—and the Fredmobile! It's been five years (relatively speaking) since Fred bought the car and he hasn't made a payment on time (which is ironic when you think about it). In fact, Fred hasn't made a payment **at all!**

Now all of these people are converging here! Fred and Bianca have been hired to steal **Earth's greatest treasure.** Not the Mona Lisa! Not the Venus de Milo! Not even Christie Brinkley! What could it be?

Find out in —

ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES™

A COMICS INTERVIEW Publication. COMING THIS SUMMER!

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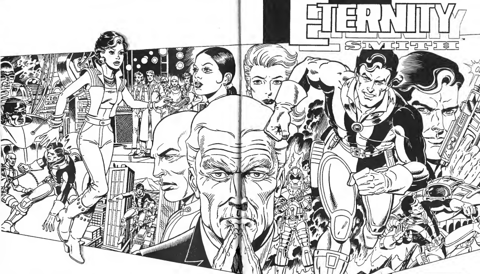
ETERNITY SMITH™



By Mark Waid

Who is Eternity Smith?

"He's not a super-hero any more than Flash Gordon is. He was a 'space-ranger' character in the future, a military man—a Buck Rogers if you will—before he got his chance to return to the 20th century."

He's also the star of a brand-new bi-monthly Renegade Press comic book set to debut in late June. The series, co-created by Dennis Mallonee and Rick Hoberg, will be an interesting departure for Renegade, not only because of its status as the company's first true "super-hero book," but also because of its format. Unlike the standard Renegade $1.70 black-and-white books, *Eternity Smith* will be a four-color book priced at $1.25.

Eternity Smith will be scripted by Mallonee and pencilled by Hoberg, with inking by Tim Burgard, lettering by David Cody Weiss and coloring by Janice Cohen. *Amazing Heroes* recently took the opportunity to speak with Hoberg—who, incidentally, has the most pleasant voice in the industry—about the series.

Genesis

According to Hoberg, *Eternity Smith* was originally pitched to DC Comics. "I would like to have worked with them on this, and they said they wanted to option it, but, after talking with Deni [Loubert, Renegade publisher] awhile, we hit it off real well. We decided to go with Renegade, and now we have total creative control."

Hoberg and Mallonee had been planning to do something together for many years. "We've known each other for quite a while, and it just happened that when we got to do something together last year, which was an Iron Man story, I found that we were just terrific together. We're an odd couple at best—we have completely different personalities and beliefs, but we jell wonderfully on comics." They decided that they wanted to collaborate, and made time for a brainstorming session that went outstandingly well

"This was about April or May of last year. The whole concept [of *Eternity Smith*] came full-blown within one hour. I'm not talking about the whole story, just the concept—but, within an hour, we knew exactly what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go. I had some ideas that I had worked on—Dennis doesn't mind me telling these tales—and I had the name [Eternity Smith] around for awhile, but under another concept.

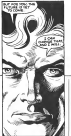
"The basic genesis for this idea is one that I've been interested in for quite a while and Dennis likes it too: What if a character like Buck Rogers came back to his own time and had to pick up his old life?"

Man with a Mission

Hoberg and Mallonee don't plan on giving away too much about Smith right off the bat, but it's safe to assume that their hero has come from "about 100-200 years in the future. He went there through some sort of time-warp process, found love and adventure, and decided to stay—even though he had a family back in his own time. He was married to a Japanese woman and they had a very young daughter.

"His name's not really Eternity, it's Ethan Caldwell Smith. Eternity is a nickname he picks up. Actually, he's a nuclear physicist from back in the mid 1960s. That's where he disappeared from, and it's almost 20 years later exactly that he reappears in our time period.

"He has a mission, of course—what hero these days doesn't? Smith has a chance to come back to the present when 'they' (says Hoberg, cryptically) have specific need of him for a particular reason. When he returns, he is reunited with his wife and daughter, both of whom are now 20 years older.


BUT FOR *YOU*, THE FUTURE IS YET TO COME.
I CAN CHANGE THAT, AND I *WILL*.

"He's come back because his wife is directly involved in something that will threaten the future. That's what he's back here to detour off. He doesn't know that he's had a figure from the future sent behind him because he's bound to make mistakes, 'they' figure, and time cannot afford any mistakes for people who know the future. There is a character, then, in the background who allies himself with Smith, but is there as an assassin as much as anything else, just in case something goes wrong."

Hoberg chooses to add very little to that brief outline of the story, preferring for the details to be revealed gradually to readers. He did, however, make mention of Smith's primary antagonist.

"The villain of the piece is an industrialist. He has no super powers—he's more along the lines of a James Bond villain, with the classic big bodyguard who is an expert at physical combat, that kind of stuff. He's a very old man, older than his years. What he's done has aged him." Eventually, he comes into conflict with our hero.

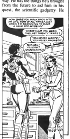
"[Smith] knows what has to be done—but, of course, he can't reveal this to everybody—so, basically, he gets people to trust him as much as he can."

Far Bayond Those Of Mortal Man

"You know how Flash Gordon could charm all the ladies even though he was a jerk most of the time? Well, that's Smith. More than anything, he's going to be a very charming jerk," says Hoberg as he explains a little more about Smith. "He's brilliant, but he knows it. He's got an ego the size of Montana that tends to make him overly confident. Like many of the great heroes, Eternity is blind to his own faults. Completely. That's the kind of character he is—total bravado, but tremendous skill. Along with the various gimmicks he's got, he's able to do fantastic things."

The mysterious masterminds behind Eternity's mission do give him "what we would consider superpowers," but only to a limited extent. "He has tremendous fighting ability—he's a real killer because he knows techniques two centuries advanced from ours. He can phase in and out because of the time-travelling device they gave him. He could, in a fight, disappear and reappear behind a gunman, for instance. Add that to his flying ability, and that's a lot for a character. We don't want to overburden this guy.

"Besides, we can come up with all the gimmicks we need along the way. He has the things he's brought from the future to aid him in his quest, the scientific gadgetry. He will have an anti-gravity device that we think is novel and a lot of fun. He carries a blaster, as well, and it will have interchangeable devices. Any time I can take a gun and redraw it in the next issue as something else," laughs Hoberg, "that's all the more fun for me. One of the things the gun does is creates an implosion effect that totally absorbs all the matter it destroys—that's the type of concept we're looking at [for the series].


HOW *DARE* YOU WALK BACK INTO MY LIFE, *NOW* OF ALL TIMES! JUST WHEN I'M BEGINNING TO MAKE A NAME FOR *MYSELF!*
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN* THE LAST TWENTY YEARS?
YOU NEVER *WROTE!* YOU NEVER *PHONED!*
SKYLARK! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

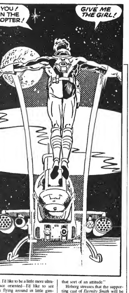
"Essentially, *Eternity Smith* has all the gadgetry and things that fascinate the kids today, but it's also got some fun with personalities. It has a flavor of *Doc Savage*, because he has a group that he works with."

The Crew

In the course of his quest, Smith finds that his daughter, Skylark, is now a grown woman. Moreover, she is lead singer for The Crew, a rock and roll band—actually, says Hoberg, a group of performers who are basically "a small secret service group. They're a group of rock musicians from around the world gotten together by the government to work with the realm of the show business world. They're a band much like, say, the Eurythmics."

The Crew consists of five members: a small, brainy character named Link; a large Texas character called Boomer; a hard, aggressive woman known as Annie; a small, Japanese girlfriend of Skylark's named Seabreeze; and the final character, a Chicano musician, a Prince-like character known as Nightshade. All of them, says Hoberg, are "in a new-wave, rock and roll vein—which is wonderful, because it lets them look just like super-heroes! What a *great* time-period to be working in!

"We were influenced a little bit by *Buckaroo Banzai*—I really liked the idea of the rock band and saw a real good opportunity to use it here. It all seemed so natural to me that I figured we'd try it and see what happens. I'd like to be a little more ultra-science oriented—I'd like to see them flying around in little gimmicks that Smith and maybe one of the scientists have made, much along the lines of the way Reed Richards used to whip up flying machines for the Fantastic Four all the time. Always changing, always modifying, that sort of an attitude."


YOU! IN THE COPTER!
GIVE ME THE GIRL!

Hoberg stresses that the supporting cast of *Eternity Smith* will be more flexible than, for instance, Doc Savage's Fabulous Five. "In this particular format, there have to be a lot of extreme life and death situations, and certainly some people are going to come and 'go' along the way."

Elements and Influences

Obviously, *Eternity Smith*'s creators view the book as a rather pulp-oriented strip. Other comics have come close to the feel and ambiance that Mallonee and Hoberg are striving for—specifically DC Comics' *Thriller*, which Hoberg recognizes as a concept drawn from the pulps but which he feels was "a little too obtuse." [*Thriller*] and a few other titles have exactly the feel I want to grasp, but I have a feeling that *Eternity Smith* needs to be more direct. This whole thing is built around emotional interaction between the characters. I openly admit that it's a soap-opera more than anything else—a science-fiction soap opera. It's going to have a lot of tears and heartache—after all, we're reintroducing a man back into his old life 20 years after he splits on everyone, and they're all a little ticked off with him."

Gloom and doom isn't always the order of the day, though. "I want readers to be able to laugh at some of the tragedy, too. I want them to be able to go, 'Ha, what a jerk,' or 'Jeez, didn't she think twice about what she did there?' That kind of stuff."

Another element that is important to Hoberg is that *Eternity Smith* is set in the present. That, he says, allows for "good, representative artwork. All the best comics are set in their own time-frame, and our comic has the immediacy of now, which is what I wanted out of it."

Beyond the Future

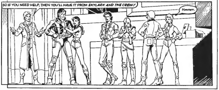
Again, one of the most surprising things about *Eternity Smith* is its price—like Eclipse, Renegade is making a serious attempt to provide the market with color comics priced competitively with DCs and Marvels. Says Hoberg, "We're going to try to make it real competitive. If the book goes up to $1.50 [between now and presstime], don't get mad at me—Dennis and I signed our contract at $1.25, and we're really trying our best to create a product that can hold its own in the marketplace.

"There's no other way to do a color super-hero book and succeed in the marketplace," adds Deni Loubert. "When you're doing a color super-hero book, you're entering an entirely different market, and you have to be able to sell your books for that kind of price. I don't think you'll ever see Renegade completely overrun by color super-hero books, but it would be nice to have a couple out there if they're money-makers."

Mallonee and Hoberg plan on doing *Eternity Smith* as a series of "six-issue novels," with every half-dozen issues comprising a complete story "much in the vein of pulp novels like those of The Shadow and Doc Savage, though we're going to try and stay with science-fiction stories. We're going to delve less into the fantasy aspect of things and more into the people themselves and the super-science. We may get into the classic super-villain thing every once in a while, but more or less we're staying with characters who are more realistic.

"Quite a bit is resolved by the end of the six issues, but not everything. The main plotline and danger will have passed, but we will reach a point where the reader will be wondering what [Smith] is going to do if he remains here, and what the characters remaining around him are going to do.

"I have to admit this is a fun strip for me. I'm not doing it for any overly intellectual need, more just fun and entertainment for people who enjoy the same kind of material I do. Hero Games has already optioned the thing, and [their role-playing adaptation] should be coming out no more than a couple of months after the book starts. I'm really amazed by it—they seem to be taken by the whole project, which is fine by me." ●

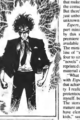

SO IF YOU NEED HELP, THEN YOU'LL HAVE IT FROM SKYLARK AND THE CREW!
Hmmm.

ESPERS

The idea had been knocking around in Jim Hudnall's head for quite awhile, he wanted to write. But it wasn't just the writing that appealed to him: he wanted to write a comic book that appealed to a wide assortment of people—an intelligent comic book. How many writers have been trying for years to appeal to a wider audience?

While kids pick up *The X-Men* and *Teen Titans* (a few adults notwithstanding) and adults are drawn to *Love and Rockets*, *Moonshadow*, and *Swamp Thing*, there really aren't too many comic books on the market that have a multi-layered plot which both young and old alike can share. What Hudnall is trying to do is bridge that gap.

There has to be action, lots of action. The comic medium just doesn't lend itself to static plots. Of course, intrigue moves the action along: there had to be plenty of intrigue. Super-powers are popular with kids of all ages and romance draws in female readers who wouldn't normally read an all-action story. Now we have plot elements that make up about three-quarters of the comic book titles every month. But there's more to this series than just unbounded enthusiasm and an unknown writer.

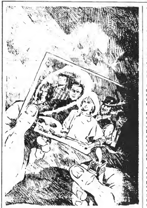


By Sue Deaunim

Espers, the final product, is a four part mini-series that should be out by this summer. It's expected to premiere in early July and will be available for a 95-cent cover price. The mini-series is just the first of a line of "novels", each one will be four to six issues in length. If these "novels" are successful, they will be reprinted as graphic novels with new material added.

"What we are attempting to do with *Espers* is [to] create a comic that achieves a literary level of quality. I realize that this is a somewhat pretentious claim for a novice like myself, but that is my sincere desire. The stories are adult in content—mature and intelligent—but they also have elements that will appeal to kids," said creator Jim Hudnall.

Actually, Hudnall isn't a total stranger to the comics field—he's the



Mick Austin's pencil rough for the cover to *Espers* #1.

Marketing Director for Eclipse Comics and is best known to comic retailers for his newsletter, *The Profit Express*.

"This is my first published comic," said Hudnall. "David [Lloyd] is a real professional and as excited about this book as I am. I think [that] people will be pleasantly surprised by what the two of us have come up with here. We both have the same strong desire to create the best comic we can."

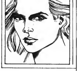
Hudnall and Lloyd have collected massive amounts of reference material on the foreign locales where *Espers* will take place. "I carefully check the geography, the language, and the architecture before I write a scene. We want the reader to feel that they have been transported to the places where the stories take place. I happen to believe that realistic settings and believable characters will help the reader fall right into the tale. Each character in *Espers* is a real human being."

This is not to imply that Hudnall thinks he's unique—he tips his hat to Alan Moore and Frank Miller, the modern masters of realism in comics. Hudnall strives for that level of realism in *Espers*:

"I want to emphasize that even though this is a 'realistic' super-hero series, it is in no way intended to be similar to DC's *Watchmen* or any such other book. What David and I are doing with *Espers* is creating an sf/adventure series for the comics crowd that is also an acceptable story for people who don't read comics. We want to reach out and grab the 'external market' as well as the comics fan."

Lloyd is best known for his work with Alan Moore on *V For Vendetta*. If you've followed the *Vendetta* series, you'll know that Lloyd pays particular attention to detail. "Not only am I concerned about good writing and thorough research, but David and I want the art to be special too. We are both dedicated professionals with a desire to break new ground. With this in mind, we've come up with many interesting visuals to add even more quality to the book," commented Hudnall. "I've also spared no expense to get some of the best artists in the business to do covers: John Bolton, Mick Austin, and Garry Leach have all signed on to do fully painted covers.

Linda.



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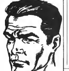
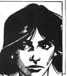


Maria.

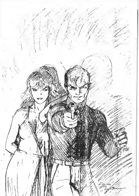


Brian Bolland is also expected to do one [although he has not signed anything at this time]. I want to make sure that this is a comic well worth the price tag.

"Each character in my series ... is a unique person with a background, a personality, an attitude and a life of their own. I research the backgrounds of each person I create to make sure that they aren't contradictions or cardboard."

The characters vary in ethnicity as well as personality. There are two leaders of the Espers: Linda Williams and Ian McVicar. Linda Williams is an American who lives in Monaco. She's independently wealthy and acts as financial backer as well as group leader. She brings the team together to rescue her father from a shadowy terrorist organization. She gathers these diverse Espers through her own Esper ability to psychically read the databanks of any computer, anywhere in the world. However, she must know the geographic location and she must be sure that it exists. She can also listen to radio and microwave transmissions, psychically look through any microphone or "bug." Transmitting her thoughts to any radio or TV set on the planet is not above her abilities either. Her only limitation is knowing where she is sending or receiving.

Ian McVicar acts as the team captain when the ESPers are on a mission. He was a former mercenary and smuggler of art treasures and jewels. He has a 60-second precognitive ability that allows him to avoid enemy attacks or turn the enemy's attack against them. He also has the ability to absorb information almost immediately and possesses an expert level of ability in most martial arts and weapons training. McVicar has the ability to attack an opponent with incredible, inhuman speed and strength; he can hit or kick an opponent 30 times per second.

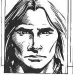


John Bolton's cover sketch for *Espers* #2.

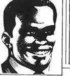
Between these two leaders, the team that Hudnall has created is unique. Lloyd commented, "[*ESPers*] is very exciting! It's a story about super-powered individuals [that] can appeal to both fans and people who don't read comics. This could be the start of a whole new approach to comic book characters."

While the first issue is mainly concerned with the gathering of the team, developments in later issues

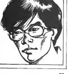
William.



Simon



Jiro



THE KATZ ARE BACK IN WHITE 'N' BLACK!

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No 3
$2.00
CANADA
K-N-KATZ KOMIKS
BIGTOWN!

Bob Laughlin's Kuddlesome Kitties win a Fish Car and take a trip to Bigtown in K'n'K #3, on sale this summer—For Kidz and Kitz and Katz of all ages!

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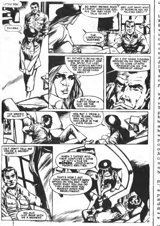

AFTER YOU.
THANKS.
SO WHAT BRINGS SUCH A LOVELY AMERICAN GIRL ALL THE WAY HERE TO TALK TO ME?
AND JUST WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
THE LIBERATION BUSINESS.
MY FATHER IS BEING HELD HOSTAGE IN BEIRUT AND I'VE SPENT THE LAST FOUR MONTHS WAITING FOR MY GOVERNMENT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
BUT ALL THEY'VE DONE IS GIVE ME THE RUN AROUND.
SO I DID SOME DIGGING AROUND ON MY OWN, TRYING TO COME UP WITH INFORMATION ON THE TERRORIST GROUP.
THE SWORD OF ALLAH?
YES, BUT I DREW A TOTAL BLANK. THERE WAS NO DATA AVAILABLE IN THE CIA'S FILES...
CIA? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE A SECRET AGENT!
WHEN I TAPPED INTO THEIR COMPUTER I CAME UP WITH A FILE ON ESPERS... PEOPLE WITH PSIONIC ABILITIES.
THAT'S HOW I GOT YOUR NAME. THEY'VE BEEN SPYING ON YOU AND THEY KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO. THEY EVEN HAVE YOU MARKED DOWN FOR RECRUITMENT.
NO, BUT JUST BEAR WITH ME A MOMENT.
10

solidify the team's direction. The stories are topical, dealing with serious and far-ranging situations. Hudnall plans to introduce many interesting subplots: romance, humor, social commentary, and lots of action.

One of the ESPers' main nemeses will be a sinister organization called The Circle. The Circle is run by an elite committee with many levels; several countries are already under The Circle's control.

There will be other villains that the ESPers will encounter but The Circle is the equivalent of Sherlock Holmes' Moriarty—the perpetual foe. Because of the multi-layered organization, it's a very good possibility that the ESPers may never reach the top echelon.

An appealing aspect of *ESPers* is the strong female characters. Said Hudnall, "I'm also writing this series so that it can be appreciated by women. I feel that there is practically a comics vacuum as far as women are concerned in the U.S. market. What few comics there are that women would enjoy reading, only a handful are good, if that many. Since women are greater readers than men (statistically, that is), I feel that it's crazy to ignore them as an audience. Therefore, my treatment of male and female relations, attitudes, and personalities are carefully constructed. My women are not men in drag. . . nor extreme caricatures. . .they are people."

There are two women in the group—while Linda Williams is the group leader and financial backer, Maria Rivas becomes the team historian. Before she came to the group, she was a journalist and social activist in Brazil. Her ability is teleportation. She can teleport to any place on Earth as long as she knows exactly where she's going. When she's teleporting, she can't take anyone or anything with her, except over short distances. She can also create a force field around herself and others. These fields can be moved at will and at blinding speeds while there is no sense of movement for the people inside the force field.

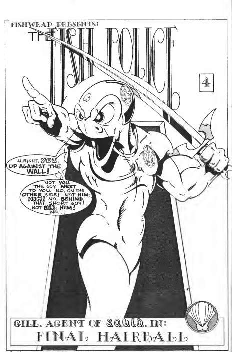
The other members of the group include: William Silent Bear, an American Indian whose powers of strength and invulnerability rival The Thing and The Hulk—he can generate a force field that enables him to lift small tanks as well as being able to leap up to 100 yards and run approximately 45 miles per hour; Simon Ashley, a Jamaican who cooks for the team and, appropriately enough, has the ability to create heat and flames as well as controlled blasts and explosions; and Jiro Yabuki, a Japanese student who can become the conduit for large masses of electricity, microwaves or radiation and direct it as a channeled beam.

Hudnall decided to do away with pseudonyms like "Blastman" or "Pow Woman." While the characters will have aliases during missions to protect their identities, real names are used in private. The rationale for aliases is to provide kids with something similar to the pseudonyms while keeping the use of such names within the the realm of believability.

Costumes are another no no. Hudnall believes that there must be an overall continuity in what they wear on missions, but no long underwear. The closest thing to long underwear is Maria Rivas's blue leotard and tights; she wears it during missions for comfort and practicality. Civilian attire is preferred in off-time activities so as not to draw attention to themselves.

"I'm trying to create the *Hill Street Blues* of comic books," said Hudnall. "There is no book like *ESPers* [on the market]. We're deliberately breaking all the rules. We want the reader to enjoy an original comic for a change."

If Jim Hudnall and David Lloyd live up to their word, we should be enjoying *ESPers* for a long time. ●


FISHWRAP PRESENTS:
THE FISH POLICE
4
ALRIGHT, YOU, UP AGAINST THE WALL!
NOT YOU, THE GUY NEXT TO YOU. NO, ON THE OTHER SIDE! NOT HIM; HIM! NO, BEHIND THAT SHORT GUY! NOT HER, HIM! NO...
GILL, AGENT OF S.Q.U.I.D. IN:
FINAL HAIRBALL

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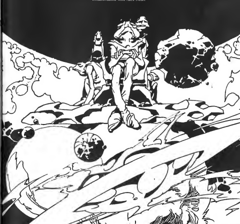
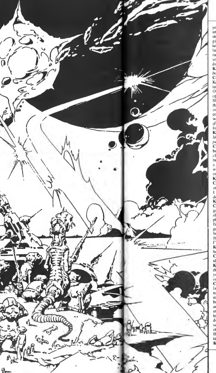
SPACE CLUSTERS

Art Cover, former AH *editor, award-winning sf novelist and all-around fine fellow, is among the first wave of writers producing original material for DC's new series of sf graphic novels. We asked the enigmatic "Komickaze," a friend of Mr Cover's of long duration, to interview him on his project:* Space Clusters, *done in collaboration with Alex Nino.*

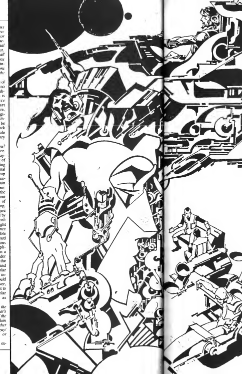


Komickaze: *You've been a professional writer for 15 years, but during this time you've written only a handful of comics. How did you manage to snare a plum assignment like this?*
Art Cover: Don't forget to mention that it will be available at comic shops everywhere. That's very important.
K: *Let's don't get* too *shameless, Cover. After all, you've some vestiges of artistic integrity to maintain here.*
Cover: I'll keep that in mind, Mr. Komickaze. The wheels in the DC offices began turning when I crashed a cocktail party Paul Levitz and Jenette Kahn threw at a posh hotel for their LA-based staffers and friends.
K: *You crashed it! Isn't that rather gauche?*
Cover: I see you don't know me very well. Actually, I went as Harlan Ellison's substitute. He couldn't make it, but he knew I wanted to meet these folks, and so I went and immediately impressed everyone with my boyish good looks and charm.
K: *Was your shirt tucked in?*
Cover: For a change, yes. Don't you want to ask me something relevant, such as how this innocent social occasion led to the creation of *Space Clusters*?
K: *If you insist.*
Cover: While talking with Paul Levitz, it turned out he had read my wild and wacky, out-of-print collection of novelettes, *The Platypus of Doom and Other Nihilists*, and it occurred to him, quite rightly as it turned out, that someone with my imagination could write an original and striking graphic novel for the sf-oriented line DC was planning.
K: *That's it? He was impressed with your imagination?*
Cover: That's all that's necessary, really, but I also have the other prerequisite repositories of knowledge in my brain that would help me complete the task with all the boyish good looks and charm I've come to expect from me. In other words, not only had I been reading comics at an obsessive rate for several years, I had been reviewing them.
K: *As Komickaze for* Mile High Futures. *I know.*
Cover: And, if I have my chronology right, I was also managing editor for *Amazing Heroes*, the very selfsame magazine the reader of this article is holding in his hands right now.
K: *But a different issue, of course.*
Cover: Naturally. Add to that the



years I spent writing sf, reading it, and helping my wife run an sf bookstore—not to mention my occasional gigs as an instructor for young, untutored would-be sf writers, and you have the kind of mind that you'd naturally expect to conceive of something as ultimately brain-damaged as *Space Clusters*.
K: *Wait a minute. Did you say bookstore?*
Cover: Who's shameless now, Mr. Komickaze? Yes, bookstore. I'm talking about *Dangerous Visions. An Original Bookstore*, owned and operated by one Lydia C. Marano in Sherman Oaks, California. Working there has always kept me involved in the sf community even though I couldn't say with all honesty that I was diligently at work reviving an sf career that I had permitted to founder somewhat.
K: *Actually, it always looked to me like it had drowned. So what happened next at the party?*
Cover: Well, someone couldn't help but notice the poker table, poker chips, and cards that somebody had brought, so I sat down and played a grueling round of heads-up poker with Paul, Jenette, Mark Evanier, and Steve Mitchell.
K: *Did you win?*
Cover: Hell, no. Those nice folks at DC fleeced me. In fact, I think I still owe Steve Mitchell five dollars.
K: *Are you planning on paying him?*
Cover: Not unless he reads this. The game took place two years ago, after all, and I'm fairly certain that if I plug the Julie-Corman-produced film he co-wrote, *Chopping Mall*, a gory send-up of the horror genre, he'll forgive me somewhat, even though I'm certain that by this time I've no artistic integrity left.
K: *You're disgusting, Cover. What happened after the poker game?*
Cover: I went home and went to sleep.
K: *A thrilling tidbit of information that I'm sure will alter the course of your readers' lives forever. I meant concerning the graphic novel.*
Cover: Oh. I see. Well, a few weeks later I was awakened by the dissonant tones of my telephone. I kicked my wife out of bed and abjectly begged her to answer it. She did, and when she learned who was calling, she ran back into the bedroom, leapt high in the air, came crashing down on top of me, and fairly screamed, "Get your buttocks out of bed, Cover. It's Julie Schwartz. He's on the phone and he wants to talk to you."
K: *Let me guess. About doing a graphic novel for DC.*
Cover: Absolutely. Julie asked me to submit a few outlines for stories that would stretch the boundaries of the form. I was natually cool, calm, and collected while speaking to him on the phone, but inside I was experiencing the secret delight I'd always felt when meeting an sf author or comics writer/artist whose work I really admired.
K: *Are you saying that because Julie organized the first official science fiction convention, which was the first time the editors, writers, and fans had ever met face-to-face in the same room? Or because Julie used to be an agent who represented the likes of Ray Bradbury, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch, and Edmund Hamilton. Or because Julie had just happened to be the editor of all your favorite comics during the formative years of your intellectual development as a fantasist, before you had discovered there were such things as books?*
Cover: Maybe, but Julie's such a great guy that I prefer to keep him guessing. Anyway, I accepted the assignment, procrastinated for a few months while I tried to figure out what I was supposed to do—something that almost by definition would "stretch the boundaries of the form"—then, after being nudged a few times from Julie, I panicked and batted out the outlines for four ideas, all of which were either based on previous fiction I'd written or stories I wanted to do but didn't kow how yet.

Julie also requested a statement of some sort specifying what my general attitude toward the assignment would be, so I also included that.
K: *Is that where you wrote 'The majority of graphic navels have thus far been glorified comic books. Higher production standards have not resulted in higher story standards. If the term 'graphic novel' is ever to have any meaning other than as a marketing concept, then the workers in the medium must aspire to achieving the dramatic and artistic standards they might expect from the average Alfred Bester novel or Bunuel film'?*
Cover: You notice that someone has scribbled—on the original of this Xerox Julie was kind enough to send us—"Absolutely true."
K: *So Julie and Dick Giordano approved* Space Clusters. *"Seeking revenge for her family and her world, Dryas Maneco has for the past 20 years pursued the man responsible on a pointless flight through hyperspace—a chase both*



have sustained with furious unwavering resolution. Now Mave Amerson—perpetrator of a minor but extremely heinous 'genocide accident'—is decelerating into normal space, onto the fringes of a vast, enigmatic solar system . . . defying all scientific law. Gradually Dryas realizes she is stalking her prey inside an organism whose functions somehow duplicate those of the humanoid brain."

Cover: Exactly. The final version of *Space Clusters*, however, bears no resemblance to the premise I submitted. Only the last paragraph is completely accurate: "*Space Clusters* will be one part melodramatic *Planet Stories* fare, another part an intense psychological drama in the tradition of Hitchcock, and yet another part will be an experimental New Wave sf attack on the comics page—on a scale unprecedented in the entire history of mankind!"

K: *Overstating it a bit, aren't you?*

Cover: Excuse me, this is an interview with *me*, not you. As I was saying, even at this embryonic stage of development, some of the building blocks of *Space Clusters* in its final form can be seen: the female cop with a personal obsession with seeing justice done, a male villain whose desire to be free won't permit him to be worn down, and the resolution of their conflict played out on a stage where some kind of supernormal function is developing. After all, if intelligence is just energy and living cells, propelled by some mechanism we as yet don't understand (but which we might after genuine artificial intelligence is achieved), then it's easily possible that somewhere in this vast backyard we call a universe, that the functions of the human brain might be duplicated in some analogous way on a cosmic scale. It's possible that under the right set of conditions, with the right kinds of electrical waves and radiations being emitted, a solar system could in and of itself be intelligent. Its slightest thought would be enigmatic to a human observer, and he would have no choice but to regard any manifestation of the solar system's intelligent thoughts as godlike.

K: *I understand that, but despite the grandiose scale of the story, what's to prevent the final resolution of the conflict between your cop and villain from being just like all the other variations on all the other goodguy/badguy stories you've read or watched or heard about?*

Cover: Strangely enough, that's exactly the question I asked myself. Eventually I hit upon the solution that my two characters should, at some point in the story, actually become *supernormal* intelligences themselves. The resolution of their conflict will be played out in a way that reflects the psychological makeup of their previous selves, but in an oblique manner that grows organically from their new set of circumstances.

K: *So they become the Space Clusters.*

Cover: And what the Space Clusters are is directly connected to what they were. The values my characters have, what they live for and what they stand for (as opposed to what they think they stand for) will live on after them in ways they could not possibly have guessed during their first lives.

K: *This brings us to the next logical problem.*

Cover: Yes. Who are these people anyway? I decided to shape the social forces that created them from trends I've glimpsed in our own, present-day society. The first, though minor, was merely a slight trick I used to increase my own sense of verisimilitude within my future world. Throughout most of sf's history—beginning in the pulps, and continuing into books, movies, and comics— the vast majority of heroes have been male and have been Caucasian to boot.

K: *You mean WASPs.*

Cover: You hit the nail right on the button. Demographic studies, however, demonstrate that in future generations, when presumably many third world nations will possess technology enabling them to compete creatively with the Europeans and Americans, the majority of mankind will be governed by a mixture of humanity quite different from the ones associated with your average John W. Campbell—edited issue of *Astounding* or *Analog*. But a slight change in pigmentation means only a change in pigmentation. Other than reflecting my personal belief as to what the future will be like, the characters' ancestry had to be utterly irrelevant. But the question had to be settled first because the design of a comic character must make some kind of visual statement. The job of the writer is to provide the artist with the clues necessary for him to make that design.

K: *The artist! I just realized something! Cover, you egotist, so far you haven't mentioned the spectacular artwork of Alex Nino.*

Cover: Don't worry; I will. Now let's be a good interviewer, Mr. *Komickaze*, and stick to the subject. Okay? Anyway, after I had some idea of what I thought the characters should look like, I had to decide what kind of social forces would shape them. I had to know why the cop was a cop, and the villain—a murderer who's probably killed the cop's father—was a villain. Obviously the cop became a cop to enforce truth, justice, and the utopian way, obviously because she had seen her father being murdered. Once I decided that, simple melodramatic logic—which was all I'd have time for—demanded the killer be a juvenile delinquent. However, I thought it might make things interesting if, yes, as a youth the villain was the scum of the Earth, so the cop would have a legitimate beef against him, but also that the juvie would grow up to be a man, an outlaw in the eyes of society, possibly, someone who can kill if necessary, all right, but still a decent man—one better suited for the frontier outworlds the cop is chasing him on.

K: *Wait a minute. This changes the equation considerably.*

Cover: It sure does, and in a way it grew and clarified itself as I was writing the first few pages of my outline. And in a way it grew out of a brief stint I had as a staff writer for an animation project of Lucasfilms. One of the books George Lucas had wanted us to read, by way of providing insight into what *he* was thinking about when he worked on the *Star Wars* trilogy, was *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* by Bruno Bettelheim.

K: *The famous child psychologist who made his initial impact in his field by analyzing and treating cases of child schizophrenia?*

Cover: The same. Doubtlessly he formulated his theories on the importance of fairly tales to a child's development in handling the problems he has to face in life from the effects they had on his patients. One of the points in Bettelheim's book is that the violence in early versions of fairy tales—the head chopping, the hungry wolves, etc.—always struck certain chords within children to drive home certain symbolic points. Once the more violent elements have been removed—something which happens today because of well-meaning liberals (or reactionary conservatives) who have certain narrow, preordained ideas about how the socially uplifting elements of the arts should work, especially on children—the fairy tale loses

X RAY'S
Father has long been dead. Murdered. But the killers still aren't satisfied.
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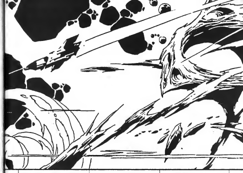


much of the impact that gave it meaning in the first place. To make matters worse, the tales often become less entertaining—they commit the heinous crime of being boring. As a consequence of my exposure to Bettelheim's ideas, I thought of my "villain" as a kid who would have gone straight if he had been exposed to violent or sexploitation films at the right age; films which, for all their artistic worthlessness, at least would have helped him work out certain basic questions about his existence.

K: *The way some "slasher" movies or, for that matter, some heavy metal music or any other teen pastime that makes parents nervous, help teens resolve their identity crises or helps them cope, however minimally, with questions of life and death?*

Cover: Uh, sure, what you said. Anyway, I conceived of my "villain" as a man who had suddenly been exposed to the proper arts he needed to mature into an adult—exactly the kind of arts our cop heroine had sworn to suppress, because she and her government believed they were the *root* of crime, instead of a possible solution.

K: *Am I to assume that the resolution of these themes in the final section of the story reflect your notions about the value of the arts as well?*

Cover: Absolutely.

K: *Okay, Cover, this is all well and good, but just how do the Space Clusters come in?*

Cover: They arrive after our heroine and anti-hero fall through the black hole.

K: *The black hole?*

Cover: That was the visual set-piece that Julie talked about first. He said, 'They fall through a black hole. I really like that.' So did Alex. I attempted strict scientific accuracy on this matter—although the characters' metamorphosis is triggered by a pseudo-mystical plot device.

K: *In other words, you tried to deal coherently with the phenomena of the event horizons, the singularity, the curvature of space. . .*

Cover: And the flattening of space, as you'll see. I also made certain that the black hole was electrically charged and rotating, which is the kind that can take a traveller to another universe. (I considered another possibility—the anti-gravity universe—for a little while, and might have used it if I'd had enough pages remaining to devote a few toward strictly exploring the ramifications. Maybe another time.)

K: *Will the hard-science contingent of the sf crowd approve?*

Cover: I doubt it. Just now I had to look up the information in William Kaufmann's *Black Holes and Warped Spacetime*, to make sure I'm remembering the terminology correctly.

K: *Are you just saying that to hedge your bets, or because you want people who don't know any better to like the story even more when they see the science is "perfect?"*

Cover: That's for me to know and for you to find out. This *is* a shameless promotional piece, after all.

K: *So it is. When are you going to start promoting Alex Nino?*

Cover: Right now, though in a way, I don't really have to. By now every reader of this article has noticed the black-and-white illustrations complimenting this copy. What I wanted from Alex was exactly what he had been itching to illustrate for many years—a graphic story that would permit him to really cut loose, utilizing all he had learned from comics, from the classic illustrators, and from what he was assimilating for working in the animation field to create both science fictional and psychological realities. He wanted to tell a story that would flow smoothly for the general reader who doesn't care what authors say in promotional pieces, and which would as well appeal to the reader who was tired of seeing stories told in boxes.

K: *How did he do?*

Cover: Let me put it this way: many

exceptional artists have illustrated my work in the past. Tim Kirk, Ron Cobb, Neal Adams, and William Stout, to name just a few. Alex has set new standards for the Cover visualization. It'll be a long time before anybody tops him.

K: *And you've seen only the black and whites?*

Cover: That's right. Alex had to send the colored originals to New York before I had a chance to see them. This is the first time, by the way (aside from the first few pages of his *More Than Human* adaptation), that Alex has colored his own artwork for general consumption. *Space Clusters* is the debut of his full capabilities.

K: *And what's the word on the final product?*

Cover: Julie summed it up this way: "The black and whites may be spectacular, but the colors are simply breath-taking. It's like the difference between night and day."

K: *And what about the final copy?*

Cover: I figure if I've done my job right, the reader won't even notice that he's reading a story. The copy went through several drafts even before Julie saw the first one. And in the second draft, I made several changes in addition to carrying out Julie's suggestions, which included cutting the copy in the first section, and straightening out the convoluted grammar in the group mind captions.

K: *The group mind?*

Cover: Certainly. It stands to reason that its grammar would be somewhat distinctive and alien to Terran ears, even in translation (which is after all exactly what the writer is doing in this kind of story).

K: *No. No! I don't care about the grammar! I want to know more about the group mind!*

Cover: For that, you'll have to read the book. I'm doing this in my own self-interest, you know.

K: *So what's the summation? Is Space Clusters a breakthrough graphic novel? Does it actually stretch the boundaries of the norm?*

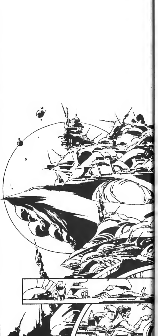
Cover: That's not for me or DC Comics to say. Naturally, I hope it is, but in the final analysis, all that's a secondary consideration.

K: *What's your first?*

Cover: Alex and I both wanted to tell a story unlike anything that's ever been written before, in any medium—books, comics, film, psychic communication, etc. I think in that regard, we definitely succeeded.

K: *Yes, but is it any good?*

Cover: You bet your sweet ***, sweetie. ●



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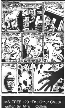


DITKO'S WORLD

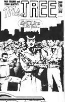
"Ditko s World featuring Static"
editor Robin Snyder

This issue begins our three-part all Ditko extravaganza The adventures of Stac Rae begin when "The General has kidnapped Doc This puts Fera between a rock and a hard place Will she call the police or Stac for help? Meanwhile "The Exploding Room" is waiting for Bruno - in his nightmares. Shag and the Uglies is the beginning of a new strip or is it the end? All of Revolver #7-9 will be a preview of Renegade s newest title. DITKO S WORLD beginning in July

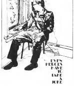
Ms. TREE

MS TREE #29 "The Other Check"
written by Max Collins
drawn by Terry Beatty with
assistance by Gary Kato

An all new, serialized graphic novel begins! Ms. Tree returns from her stay at the mental institution. The question is, will her "cure" be the death of her?


MAX COLLINS and TERRY BEATTY'S
Ms. TREE
29

WORDSMITH

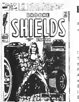


WORDSMITH #5 Even Heroes Have To Take A Joke Written by David Darrigo drawn by R G Taylor

At a Writer s Guild dinner Clay gets into a verbal joust with a Nazi who maintains that there s no difference between the All American mythic hero and the German Aryan ideal Clay writes about an anti facist hero called The Freedom Fighter which becomes a joke around the New York Magazine community

STRATA

written by Joe Judt penciled by Ray Murtaugh
inked by Jim Brozman
Everyone wants Flambeau on their side as the undeclared great patriotic war comes to a head Flambeau gets fed up and decides to fight back Fun fighting and furry otters galore!

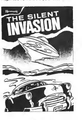


PHONEY PAGES

PHONEY PAGES #2
written and drawn by Terry Beatty

This is the second part of a two-issue mini-series by Ms Tree artist Terry Beatty This time Terry is having a bit of fun as we look at various comic books and their characters (and the artists who drew them) Featured are "Marshall Rogers Neighborhood" "Brooke Shields, Agent of F U R Y Chaplin America"; and "Leave It To Little Beaver Reprinted from the old CBG feature, with some changes 24 pages B&W
(enclosed a page from "Brooke Shields, Agent of F U R Y"

SILENT INVASION #2 Secrets and Insidious Machinations
written by Larry Hancock
drawn by Michael Cherkas
Matt Sinkage and Gloria Amber are hunted by the FBI Red Agents and other secret organizations as they flee across the country towards a mysterious rendezvous part two of a continuing story The Stubbinsville Connection
(enclosed cover)



BLACK ZEPPELIN

BLACK ZEPPELIN #5
editor Joe Erslavas

Another all-Canadian issue opening with the second chapter of a three-part story The Infinite Man by Gabrielle Morissette and Mark Shainblum Also featured this issue a killer returns in Dave Sim and Gene Day s macabre story Life s End and a dark SF tale Between Two Worlds by Gordon Derry, Barry Blair, and David Day Cover by David Day 32 pages, B&W

FLAMING CARROT COMICS

FLAMING CARROT #12
written and drawn by: Bob Burden
More of the crazy adventures of everyone's hero, the Flaming Carrot. Join the strangest man alive as he hunts for insidious plots and lots of mysterious bad guys!!

COMICS in review

X-Avengers

By Chris Meier

Mark Gruenwald, once fan and now Marvel editor, had an idea for an "X-Men West" comic book. Instead, Chris Claremont and Louise Simonson (then called Jones) brought us *The New Mutants*. Gruenwald's idea was apparently adapted for *X-Factor*, which reunited the original X-Men, but not out west. This was done due to "popular demand," even though three of the old mutants seemingly doomed *The New Defenders*.

Anyway, Gruenwald got his way with an "Avengers West" limited series which foreshadowed the regular monthly adventures of the *West Coast Avengers*. I can hardly wait for the *Chicago Avengers*, and the *Miami X-Men*, or even the *Pittsburgh Power Pack*. Boy, oh boy.

As you doubtlessly notice, superhero franchises aren't my favorite thing. In a more charitable mood I might concede it's a somewhat plausible idea (I never liked all the heroes living in New York), but no matter how likely it might be, we all know the motive behind it. Selling comics this way kind of deadens the nobility portrayed in the books.

It is well-written, however, by Steve Englehart, and I found myself slipping back more than ten years to when I first discovered Marvel. It wasn't too long before I differentiated between the various writers and Englehart became my favorite.

The sharp plotting is still in his writing, every minor incident and casual remark utilized in a following issue. He is a writer in control and that's an immense plus in comics today. You can talk about your Claremont continuity if you want, but I'll take Englehart's any day.

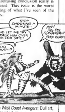
I also like his dialogue. It has an identifiable ring to it, like Roy Thomas's has, that you can spot a mile away. Englehart's choice of word emphasis (not used by many Marvel writers today) is excellent, which brings a naturalness to the spoken parts. Alas, I detect the over-explaining for the younger readers that is the norm in mainstream comics. He's also putting more words into the script, but he doesn't overwrite. I think writing comics during the "less words" period was great training that new scripters don't have.

The characterizations are pretty solid. I like Tigra for once, for example. He's turned Hawkeye into a leader (a dubious prospect), evolved Wonder Man from a snivelling coward to an over-confident powerhouse, and developed Mockingbird into a very distinctive character. She comes up with all of the ideas, takes the dangerous jobs, tends to be pushy and is a bit of a show off. I really like her, except for her "proud to be an ex-S.H.I.E.L.D. agent" routine. Englehart's Iron Man isn't too hot, though; it never seems like it's the guy from his own book. He has more trouble with villains in the Avengers than on his own, like Englehart isn't quite sure what Shellhead should do.

Unfortunately, the book is badly drawn. The team of Al Milgrom and Joe Sinnott from *The Avengers* have the art duties and the results are less than captivating. Backgrounds are often empty, as in the drab colored confrontation scene in #8. The action scenes are usually given the eight-panels-a-page blues. A group shot is sure to contain a foreground figure done in silhouette. Whenever anyone exudes Great Power, it's irresponsibly dull.

Mephisto makes a quickie appearance in #9 and comes off like a two-bit villain. It brought back memories of the Alan Kupperberg version in *Thor*, who swiped from Buckler, if memory serves me. This is one bad guy that simply must be done right, and this time he isn't (most times he isn't).

Mockingbird's mental battle with the mind-controlling Headlok in issue #10 isn't very exciting, her panels badly cross cut with the others' fighting, with no dramatic build up. Like Tigra in panel six on page 18, figures take on exaggerated stances that go too far. Hawkeye's reaction to the cancellation of the six-member rule doesn't work, and the confusing conclusion really is confused. This issue is the worst offering of what I've seen of the series.

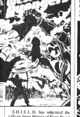

STOP SHOOTING A MINUTE--
--AND LET ME TRY TO TALK HIM OVER TO OUR SIDE!
DO WHAT--?
PST! PSS PSS FRRRRRRUP! PURP PURP!

From *West Coast Avengers*: Dull art, exaggerated stances.

Issue #11 is a bit of an improvement in the art, but it's still Milgrom and Sinnott, so that's not saying much. These guys are the basic Marvel artist types, and they certainly are better than some, but it's just too bland for my personal taste.

This issue sets up the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* limited series, and it's this kind of tight continuity that drives me up the wall. Things are so constricted in the Marvel Universe that if Spider-Man sneezes in his comic, Reed Richards will say "Gesundheit" over in the *Fantastic Four*. I'm not interested in S.H.I.E.L.D.'s contrived problems simply because S.H.I.E.L.D. has never been a true spy organization, but rather a costumed army. The least the Marvel staff could do is read Le Carre novels.

I tell you, whenever the superheroes visit S.H.I.E.L.D. what little believability there may be goes out the window. The agents stand around heavily armed all the time, they only tried superpowered agents once (and Captain America beat them all by himself), they don't use any spy techniques outside of sending someone undercover, and no one at Marvel can decide if they're an American or an international agency.



S.H.I.E.L.D. has inherited the villains from *Master of Kung Fu*, so I take this to mean that the Marvel people figure Doug Moench's Shang-Chi is the only way to do spy comics (and he borrowed from every popular piece of spy fiction he could). Hell, the villains even escape from under the Avengers' noses just like they did with annoying frequency in *MOKF*. Of course, in *WCA #9*, when captive Mockingbird has to aid her rescuers she notes, "There's the '80s in a nutshell!" I note that this plot twist was first notably done in *Fantastic Four* #5, circa 1962. What will we have when the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* book rehashes *MOKF* rehashes? Hash, I suspect.

Anyway, I didn't like #s 10 or 11. Overall, Englehart's writing brought back memories, and he puts out a nicely scripted book, if you can get past some contrivances and some standard Marvel business and incredibly average art.

But four issues were all I could take.

REVIEWS
RAJONES

QUEST FOR FLARE
JONNY QUEST #1-2

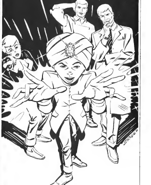
Confession time again.

I *love* animated cartoons. I probably always will. Childhood was the golden time—discovering such treasures as the old Warner Bros. and Max Fleischer cartoons, the Disney classics, even some of the Terrytoons.

The interest is still there, but there is very little to spark the imagination any more. Escalating production costs have reduced most American cartoons to the level of crude flip cards. Creators seem to have forgotten that the very best of the classic cartoons were intended for adults as much as for children (indeed, I daresay there is no youngster who can fully appreciate the '40s Warner Bros. cartoons). The Japanese continue to make cartoons on both levels, and while they lack the fluidity of the classics, they compensate with stunning color and exotic ambience.

Perhaps the last truly outstanding American cartoon series was *Jonny Quest* which was produced, rather ironically, by Hanna-Barbera—the company that in many ways exemplifies all that is wrong with modern animation. But they did these cartoons *right* and after 20 years they still hold up well. Mixing realistic graphics with high adventure and light comedy, the series was a delight for children of all ages.

But that was two decades ago, and



we've not seen its like since. Until now.

Comico, which has achieved a position of prominence largely on the strength of its comic book adaptations of Japanese cartoons, has decided to milk the rich American animation vein as well. And I can think of no better series to revive than *Jonny Quest*. Judging from the long list of creative talents who have offered to work on the book, I am far from alone in my high regard for the old series.

The first name on that list has to be Doug Wildey. Best known to younger comics fans for his highly acclaimed work on the western series "Rio," Wildey is also the man who created Jonny Quest. It is only appropriate then that he supplied the first story in this new series.

Somewhere in North Africa, Race Bannon (who was always my favorite character in the original cartoon series)—accompanied by Jonny and his friend Hadji—searches for the site of an ancient lost city. They find it, of course, but they also encounter danger and political intrigue.

In a mere 12 pages, Wildey successfully captures many of the elements that made the cartoon so successful. The familiar characters (including Dr. Quest and Bandit) are just as we remember them. Race Bannon's some-time love interest, Jade Jezebel, makes a timely appearance and the villain behind the political machinations is the Quests' old nemesis, Dr. Zin.

Wildey also painted this story, which takes on a murky appearance in the black-and-white photocopy on which this review is based. Using his beautifully rendered cover illustration as a yardstick, though, I don't think anyone will be disappointed with the interior art.

As a side note, I found it somewhat surprising but extremely interesting that, as I read the first story to myself, I could actually "hear" the dialogue in my mind—spoken in the voices associated with the different characters.

The second story in the issue is by the series' regular writer, Bill (*Journey*) Loebs, with artwork by Steve Rude and Mike Royer. Rude does an excellent job of maintaining his own distinctive style while simultaneously capturing the proper look and feel for the main characters. Royer—an underrated talent—melds beautifully with Rude's solid style.

The story stumbles somewhat, as the heroes set out to explore the lost city, which may or may not be populated by ageless warriors from throughout time. The tale does not end so much as drift away, with an over-used denouement that is more trite than intriguing. Still, Loebs demonstrates that he can handle the light, fast-paced action so vital to this series (and diametrically opposed to the deliberate, low-key storytelling that characterizes his work in *Journey*).

Loebs really begins to cook in the second issue with a story that spotlights the death of Jonny's mother and his first meeting with Race Bannon. Loebs delivers a tale liberally laced with action, while at the same time portraying Judith Quest's death in a manner that is touching without being maudlin.

He is ably assisted by the somewhat unlikely art team of Wendy Pini and Joe Staton. Like Rude, Wendy lets touches of her own elfin style peek through, yet remains true to the artistic spirit of the series. Her lovingly rendered illustration of a bed-ridden Mrs. Quest gently cupping Jonny's face in her hand is one of the most tender scenes I have ever seen in a comic book.

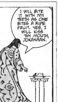
From what can only be described as humble origins, Comico has grown into one of the more interesting publishers in the comics field today. There is no pretense to their style, none of the false snobbery that so often masks inferior offerings. Their goal is to entertain as many people as possible. In a world that is often too much with us, that is not such a poor aspiration.

They succeed in their mission with *Jonny Quest*. It is clean-spirited, fun adventure, told in a style that should prove appealing to young and old(er) alike. Try it.

SEVENTH VEIL
SALOME #1-2

One could little have expected, when Craig Russell was drawing the adventures of Ant-Man many years ago, that he would develop into one of the most classically adept artists in all of comics. He has now turned his eye for the exquisite to the disturbingly erotic story of Salome. He has drawn his inspiration from such diverse sources as the Bible, Richard Strauss, and the bizarrely insightful Oscar Wilde.

Unlike Russell's other operatic adaptations, the story of Salome is accessible to a wide audience, because of its Biblical origins. As presented here, it is a haunting psycho-sexual drama of lust, obsession, and passion denied.


I WILL BITE IT WITH MY TEETH AS ONE BITES A RIPE FRUIT. YES, I WILL KISS THY MOUTH, JOKANAAN.

Russell skillfully melds dialogue with graphics, giving precedence to each in turn as it is needed. Every comics creator should always bear in mind that wherever images can suffice without words, they should be allowed to do so.

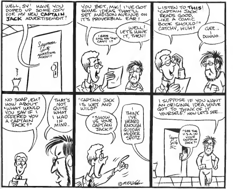
An excellent example of this comes on the very first page. A dissolute Herod absently licks his lips while staring at his step-daughter Salome. The thought balloon above his head carries no words, but rather the picture of a disembodied tongue, dripping with saliva. Anyone who cannot tell exactly what Herod is thinking should be reading *Top Dog*. For all others it is a delicious touch.

Disturbed by the incestuous intentions of Herod, Salome flees to the courtyard outside his palace. There, in a dank cistern, the prophet Jokanaan (John the Baptist) is imprisoned. Twofold is the message he has brought from the wilderness. He proclaims the coming of the Messiah and, more dangerously, he denounces Herod's wife Herodias—who had previously been wed to Herod's older brother.

Hearing Jokanaan cry out his message from the darkness, Salome desires to see the man behind the voice, and orders him to be brought forth. Such is expressly forbidden by Herod, but Salome uses her seductive charms on the guard Narraboth (who is enamored of her), and the prophet is allowed to rise out of his prison.

Jokanaan is like some emaciated cave beast. His rough hide clothing stands out in dark contrast to the

THE AD-VENTURES OF MIKE KAZALEH


WELL, SY! HAVE YOU DOPED UP SOME COPY FOR MY NEW CAPTAIN JACK ADVERTISEMENT?
Seymour Spotz ADVERTISING AGENCY
YOU BET, MK! I'VE GOT SOME IDEAS THAT'LL SET MADISON AVENUE ON IT'S PROVERBIAL EAR!
I CAN CALL YOU "MK" CAN'T I?
WELL! LET'S HAVE IT, THEN!
LISTEN TO THIS! "CAPTAIN JACK READS GOOD, LIKE A COMIC BOOK SHOULD!" CATCHY, HUH?
GEE.. I DUNNO..
NO SOAP, EH? HOW ABOUT "WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I OFFERED YOU A CAPTAIN JACK?"
THAT'S NOT QUITE WHAT I HAD IN MIND..
"CAPTAIN JACK IS WET AND WILD!"
"SHOW US YOUR CAPTAIN JACK!"
I THINK I'VE HEARD ENOUGH GUDDAY MISTER SPOTZ.
©MKAZALEH
I SUPPOSE IF YOU WANT AN ORIGINAL IDEA, YOU'VE GOT TO THINK OF IT YOURSELF! NOW LET'S SEE...
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ghostly white of his skin. From beneath a tangled mess of hair, the eyes of a zealot blaze forth.

Salome is captivated by this apparition—much as she herself is the source of endless fascination for her step-father. Entranced by the prophet's wild beauty, she attempts to seduce him. Mesmerized, she has no thought save her desire to kiss his full lips.

Driven to despair by the amorous attention Salome directs at Jokanaan, the love-smitten guard Norraboth kills himself. Such is the fervor of her obsession that she merely steps over the lifeless body—unmindful that a man has died for love of her.

When her overtures are in turn soundly rejected, Salome's thoughts turn to murder rather than suicide. Her chance for revenge comes when a drunken Herod swears to grant her any wish if she will but dance with him.

Russell choreographs that infamous dance in a remarkable three-page sequence rife with symbolism. Salome begins her seductive dance of the veils as the body of the suicidal guard is being carried away. One by one, she peels away the covering veils of her clothing. Herod, blind with lust, snatches one of the filmy veils, caressing it as if it was Salome herself he held pressed against his flesh.

Nothing will distract the dusky siren. She is oblivious when her bare feet slide through the pools of Norraboth's blood. She is heedless when a swirling veil slithers through the air to wrap itself around the ax held by the royal executioner.

As unheard music reaches a crescendo, Salome's dance carries her to the lip of the cistern-prison. The moon backlights her sinuous, naked body as the final veil floats down into the darkness of the cell.

The prize Salome demands for her entertainment is known to all: the head of the prophet, delivered on a silver plate. The visual horror of the moment when she is delivered of her bounty is overshadowed by the deeper repugnance elicited as Salome proceeds to taunt the discorporate head.

When she goes so far as to kiss Jokanaan's cold lips in a display of love, Herod orders that she too be killed. Without hesitation, his guards savagely murder the woman.

Needless to say, we are not talking standard comic book fare here. The underlying message appears to be that those who allow themselves to be the slave of their passions sow the seeds of their own destruction. The guard, obsessed with love for a woman who hardly knows him, would rather die than suffer to see another man enjoy the pleasure of her attentions.

Salome's obsession with what she cannot have leads her to murder, and she is in turn murdered herself. Herod is a man whose entire life seems to be driven by mindless passions for his brother's wife and throne and for his wife's daughter. In his decadence can be seen an existence devoid of all meaning.

Even Jokanaan is doomed by his passionate fervor. While his obsession is perhaps nobler than that of those around him, it has made him icy and aloof. He is lacking humanity, sensitivity. And no message is forthcoming if the messenger is dead.

Salome is an artistic tour de force for Craig Russell. Re-telling this timeless tale of pride and damnation with the ethereal illustrating style that is his hallmark, he has succeeded in touching that primal chord that yet reverberates within us all. This book carries the impact of an emotional piledriver.

I highly recommend it.

ROACH MOTEL
HOOKY

In a darkened New York alleyway, the Amazing Spider-Man meets with a young girl named Mandi. To the casual observer, she certainly seems no different from any other twelve-year-old. One would never suspect that she's actually 219 and an other dimensional sorceress.

Magically trapped in the mind and body of a child, Mandi has come to seek Spider-Man's help against a far greater peril. In the mystic plane wherein she dwells lives a creature she calls the Tordenkakerlak (roughly "Thunder Roach").

Mandi fears that the creature is her bane—prophesied doom against which she has no hope of survival. Taken with Mandi's fresh innocence, the webslinger willingly puts his life on the line.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no way to kill the Thunder Roach. Each time it appears to have been destroyed, the creature merely metamorphoses into an even larger, more deadly form. As the struggle against the beast grows increasingly hopeless, Spider-Man comes to realize that there is only one way it can be defeated.

Mandi must grow up.

I have been known to chide comics fans for their preoccupation with art over story, but I must admit to committing the same sin from time to time. This was one of those times. I had little information beforehand concerning the story herein. I had never even heard of the author. Top that with my reticence to pay six bucks for a comic, and you finally uncover the real reason I wanted to own this book.

The reason's name is Berni Wrightson.

I have been able to follow Wrightson's career almost from the beginning (and I cringe when I think that those early efforts saw print more than a decade-and-a-half ago). His early renderings, in DC's *Showcase* and mystery titles, were not entirely to my liking. It was when he moved over to such black-and-white magazines as *Web of Horror* that I began to see the real beauty of his darkly styled illustrations.

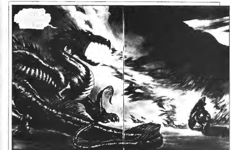
Then came *Swamp Thing*, and Wrightson earned a place of honor on my list of truly outstanding graphic artists. Since that day, I have never been truly disappointed in any piece of work he produced.

Chances to see that work, at least in the comics medium, have unfortunately grown increasingly rare in recent years. So it is that I have eagerly anticipated *Hooky* for several months.

As I have come to expect, Berni once again re-writes the book on graphic storytelling. His incredibly fluid style is ideally suited for The Hero that Ditko Built. This particular story also gives full rein to an imagination that functions best when portraying the bizarre, the grotesque, the horrific. The constantly-evolving Thunder Roach is highly evocative of the beast in John Carpenter's otherwise dismal remake of *The Thing*.

Along with his wife Michelle, Wrightson has also added to one dimension that practically demands the type of slick paper used in graphic novels: captivating color. Each page—particularly in the scenes taking place in Mandi's alien dimension—is a study in the depths of texture that can be achieved by truly gifted colorists.

There are six full-page illustrations presented in the course of the book, and five double-page spreads. At another time, in other hands, this would probably lead to accusations of shameless padding. Here, however, the scope of Wrightson's art is such that it needs—demands—the extra space. Some of the pages here are suitable for framing.



Some of the double-page spreads in Berni Wrightson and Susan K. Putney's *Hooky* are suitable for framing—but it's still just a big expensive comic book.

Even though it was the presence of Wrightson that induced me to purchase *Hooky*, I could not allow it to be the sole criterion on which to base this review. If I had wanted nothing but pretty pictures, I would have bought a portfolio.

As I stated before, I was totally unfamiliar with Susan Putney or any work she may have done previous to this. Regardless, I found she acquitted herself quite well. Her characterization of Spider-Man was dead on target, and she managed to tread that fine line between the precious and the cloying to make Mandi a real charmer. She even gave the story a moral without bludgeoning us over the head with it. Putney has given us one of the better Spider-Man stories of the past year.

Which, strangely enough, left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction. I would rather not pay six dollars for a good Spider-Man story. I should be able to find that every month in one of his regular $.75 titles (and, by and large, I *can*: at least in the ones writtten by Peter David).

This is the problem I have with the whole concept of the "graphic novel" as it exists in America today. Of the nearly two dozen that Marvel has published, only that starring the X-Men comes even close to deserving of the title. In my opinion, the only graphic novel on the stands today is *Moonshadow*. Under my definition, *Hooky* does not qualify as a graphic novel.

It is a slick, thick—expensive—*comic book*. I would not care to argue with anyone that Berni Wrightson's art would have been weakened somewhat by smaller size and cheaper paper—obviously it would. But don't forget that he was able to project images nearly this vivid on mere pulp a decade ago.

And it is only Wrightson's painted art that in any way justifies presenting this story in the graphic novel format. Had it been illustrated by Ron Frenz it probably still would have been much better than *Revenge of the Living Monolith*, but it certainly would not have been worth this kind of money to obtain.

I don't want that to be taken as a harsh criticism of Susan Putney. She has crafted a fine story, and I hope she sees fit to offer her services to Marvel's regular line of books in the future. I simply feel that a story concept should be far above the standard to justify the graphic novel treatment.

Putney's story here does not quite reach that level, but the dazzling artistry of Berni Wrightson lifts it just high enough for me to give it a qualified recommendation.

TECHNO TEENS
Syphons #1

In the beginning, they were four teenaged orphans who had decided to strike out on their own. Then came their close encounter of the decidedly bizarre kind. Seeing a UFO coming to ground, their curiosity led them to investigate. Gazing upon the huge alien spacecraft, they were suddenly bathed in a blinding light.

When the teens came to, they found themselves in the custody of a secret organization called Skyview. The leader of this group, Mr. Cross, informed them that Skyview had been established to investigate UFO sightings, and that he wanted to keep them under observation.

Apparently, the alien light had left the four Earthlings with powers and abilities far beyond those of normal teens. Mr. Cross formed them into a team, trained them in the use of

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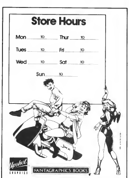

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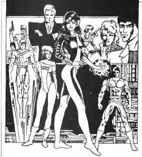


their newfound powers, clad them in distinctive costumes, gave them the code names Raze, Brigade, Knightfire and Stardancer, collectively christened them The Syphons and then turned them loose to fight crime. They never seem to question what this has to do with UFO investigations.

Likewise, Mr. Cross doesn't feel it necessary to inform his teen operatives of a few facts. After they have overcome a gang of thieves, they are unaware that a second team of non-superpowered Skyview agents would then callously murder the apprehended criminals (Skyview seeking "not law, but justice"). And only Cross knows about the existence of the Syphon Gate, a spatial portal from which spews an army of deadly aliens.

It seems quite obvious that, while the teens may wear the costumes, it is Mr. Cross who wields the real power.

Let's get another obvious point out of the way first. We need another superhero team comic about as much as we need *Secret Wars III*. There are so many team titles on the stands now that you can't keep the names straight. I have a theory (don't I always?) as to one possible reason we are seeing so many teams in comics.

Look back to the 1960s. Proportionally speaking, I doubt that there were half as many super teams as we have today. Now look at the social climate of that period. To be sure, there were mass protests, sit-ins, an explosion of communal living. But the greater emphasis was placed on the individual. We all wanted to "do our own thing." The "Establishment" was looked upon with distrust. Conformity was the great taboo. Our heroes were loners.

Today, the emphasis—both governmentally and socially—is on "team players." Many people seem to have lost the need to maintain an individual identity. They seem to find definition only in terms of some large ethnic or class entity. Mark Evanier presented a strong case in arguing that animated cartoons have begun to reflect that same homogenous attitude. Today's kids don't want to be the Lone Ranger, they would prefer to belong to a tribe of Smurfs.

On a more practical, and perhaps equally valid level, team books probably hold an economic charm as well. It is certainly cheaper to publish one book starring four heroes than it is to publish four separate titles. There is also the hope that if certain members of the audience don't like one of the team members, they will love one of the others.

Regardless of the reason for this proliferation, there is no question that team books sell in today's market. It is therefore completely understandable (if not admirable) that comic companies—whether the largest of the mainstreams or the smallest of the alternatives—feel compelled to publish more and more of them.

And creator Allen Davis has not done a bad job with *Syphons*. While there is no evidence of the extraordinary in either his plotting or scripting, he does at least appear to have a reasonably good grasp of the basics of writing (which is more than can be said for many of the scribes whose work is currently on display).

Davis comes through with a competent script, though one that shows he still has much to learn. Some elements, such as the origin sequence, are not fully developed or well paced. The melodramatic dialogue is typical comic-ese—fairly wallowing in angst. I also think it is probably wiser to start a new book off with a story that is at least superficially complete in one issue, rather than presenting a tale that seems to be merely the opening chapter of what will probably be a multi-part saga.

The same evaluations apply to Davis' artwork. By most standards, it would be deemed not quite professional. There are indications, in both his pencilling and inking, that his art could become very good with time and refinement. While it is not yet of the highest caliber, neither is it so poor that he need hang his head in shame.

The photostat copy I received also has a notation informing me that the actual book will appear in "full-color mando*brite*"—whatever the hell that is. Not that I care greatly, so long as it isn't related to the dreaded flexography.

In summation, *Syphons* is a book of promise not yet fulfilled. If you are a fan who considers every team book to be a necessary acquisition, then you will probably not be greatly disappointed with this effort. And even if you hate team books, it wouldn't hurt to thumb through a copy.

After all—it's in mandobrite!

THE MINDY CITY
Lois Lane #1

Continuing where I left off in my review of the first fourteen pages of the Lois Lane mini-series:

Having stood witness as the decomposed body of a small child was pulled from the river, Lois is determined to turn her energies toward alerting the public to the growing problem of missing children, starting with a front-page account of the scene on the waterfront.

City Editor James McCullough has other ideas, however. Unwilling to let a reporter, no matter how famous, dictate editorial policy, McCullough clashes head-on with the strong-willed Lois. She is determined to follow up on her story, no matter what. Her digging brings her to the offices of ChildSearch, Inc., where she receives first-hand exposure to the parents of an abducted infant.

I never cared much for Lois Lane. Even as a child, it was painfully obvious that she had no more depth than a soap dish. As portrayed by a plethora of male writers, Lois spent an inordinate amount of time trying to uncover Superman's secret identity. And such was the sincerity of her love for him that she was constantly swooning over any powerful man who displayed the slightest interest in her. She held about as much appeal for me as did a leech.

Writers' sensibilities were expanded somewhat in the late '60s and '70s. Lois no longer spent her time devising various deceptions aimed at uncovering Superman's ID or goading him into marriage. The stories were often just as contrived, however, and she still behaved like a refugee from an old romance comic.

Today, a rising young female writer is chronicling the life of Lois Lane, and I would no longer describe the character as being a silly piece of fluff.

Now... she's a bitch.

I can't remember the last time so many pages were devoted to so unlikeable a human being. Lois is just as shallow as ever, but now she is mean-spirited as well. Professionally, she behaves like a petulant child—demanding that things be done her way or not at all. Through intimidation, she attempts to run roughshod over anyone who stands between her and her objective. She is obsessive to the extreme.

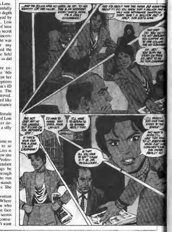
On a personal level, the woman is even more despicable. Where once she fell for every man who came along with a handsome face and a ready smile, she now seems to think of them as mere conveniences. After all, she doesn't want to go to a chic restaurant alone. Following an estrangement of several years, Lois's sister Lucy attempts to talk with her. Forget it—Lois is too busy covering her story.

Are we supposed to believe that Lois really cares about all those missing children when she so obviously cares nothing for the friends and family around her?

Scripter Mindy Newell obviously knows that the Lois Lane she is portraying is a totally unlikeable character (and there may be an extenuating circumstance, in the form of a botched Mid-East interview that is mentioned several times). I fully expect that, in the concluding issue of the series, Lois herself will come to this realization, and will be fundamentally changed as a result of that revelation. If such does *not* happen—well, I doubt if DC will find much reader interest in seeing a sequal.

Aside from the characterization of the title's star, Newell has delivered what is, generally speaking, a very well-written script. Her captions are at times verbose, but she continues to show developing strength in her use of dialogue.

She also has a very interesting story here but not the one that receives the bulk of the attention. The book is at its best when dealing with the journalistic process and when focusing on Lois's deteriorating personal relationships.


...AND THE POLICE HAVE NO LEADS, AS YET, TO HER IDENTITY OR HER KILLER. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT STORY! WHAT'S MORE, IT'S A DAILY OCCURRENCE!
AND IT'S ABOUT TIME THIS PAPER DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT! DO YOU KNOW THAT A MILLION AND A HALF KIDS NATIONWIDE DISAPPEAR EVERY YEAR? A MILLION AND A HALF, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
AND WHAT DO YOU DO? IT'S NOT ENOUGH YOU CONFINE ME TO ONE COLUMN AND NO RUNOVER
OH, NO! YOU BURY THE STORY ON PAGE 53, NEXT TO AN AD FOR LINGERIE
AND NOT JUST ANY AD FOR LINGERIE BUT A COME-ON FOR MOTHER'S DAY!
I'D HAVE TO AGREE. BAD TASTE, POOR LAY-OUT.
I'LL HAVE TO SPEAK TO ED BYRNES ABOUT THAT.
...I'LL RESIGN! AND GIVE THIS STORY TO THE EAGLE!
AND WHAT'S MORE, I'LL LIKE THAT RAG TO LET EVERYONE KNOW JUST HOW CONSCIENTIOUS THE PAPER REALLY IS!
IF THAT'S YOUR IDEA FOR A JOKE, I'M NOT LAUGHING!
IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY? CAUSE IF IT IS, MR. McCULLOUGH...

When, in the second half of the book, the story spotlights the issue of missing children, it draws perilously close to dropping over the precipice from being fiction to becoming a public service message. Since Lois is gathering background information for her story, the recitation of the requisite statistics comes more naturally than in the first issue of *Teen Titans Spotlight* (reviewed two issues ago), but it brings the flow of the story to a jarring halt and makes one feel he is reading in a lecture hall. It might have been better if some of the facts and figures had been instead inserted into the book's text piece, thus leaving Mindy more fredom to simply concentrate on telling a good story.

A comic that deals in such realistic terms as this one deserves an artist adept at creating the illusion of visual realism. And there are few illustrators better suited to that task than Gray Morrow. Why the man's talent is not more widely recognized, I'll never know. A good example of his skill could be found in a recent issue of *Star Trek* which focused on Dr. McCoy. In every panel, from every angle, you could clearly see actor DeForrest Kelly holding forth.

Morrow brings that same sense of reality to *Lois Lane*. Best of all, he is able to bring that photographic quality to a book without sacrificing the emotional expressiveness that comics art needs. He is one of the industry's genuine treasures, and he gives the issue at hand an artistic integrity that helps immensely.

The problem of missing children is, of course, a disturbingly real one and it deserves our concern and attention. If *Lois Lane* #1 does not completely succeed as a good story, it is at least commendable for its effort to heighten our awareness.

And I'll be eagerly awaiting the second issue to see if Mindy is able to redeem Lois Lane, or has to book her on a prime time soap opera as a Joan Collins clone.

BITTER FRUIT
The Shadow #4

Succinctly: I have *never*, in my 20-plus years of comics collecting, seen a series fall apart so quickly and so completely as did Howard Chaykin's *Shadow*.

The problem, at least as I perceive it, can be stated with equal brevity. Chaykin developed a terrific prologue—he simply didn't have a story with which to follow it.

The first issue of this mini-series was outstanding, a textbook example of structured storytelling, of building suspensefully to a dramatic plateau. Like most observers, I felt the book would be a sure-fire winner.

In issue #2, Chaykin basically rewrote the origin of the Shadow. According to his version, the real Lamont Cranston was a drugged-out, psychotic killer without an ounce of human decency. Some Shadow purists were disturbed by this new slant.

Not being such a purist, I felt no great annoyance over the changes.

I did, however, feel that the quality of the storytelling had dropped somewhat in the second issue—not greatly, but noticeably. The main plot was advanced only slightly, though I considered this to be an unavoidable side effect of the necessity to recount the Shadow's origin. I expected Chaykin to bounce back with full force in subsequent installments.

Then the third issue came along, and the fear was driven home that Chaykin had lost complete control of the series. To be sure, there were still nice touches to be found—notably the Shadow as an unrelenting male chauvinist. He can get away with it, of course, for he apparently has the power to cloud the minds of women as well as men. Witness Mavis Lockhart's quick transition from adversarial feminist to obedient love slave. Likewise, Chaykin's art was still first rate. He would maintain the visual quality of the book throughout its run.

Storywise, however, the third issue was little more than a classier version of an *A-Team* episode. The Shadow is unquestionably a violent character, and the thread of that violence must interweave throughout his adventures. But here it seemed little more than padding for a story without substance.

MERCY... I-DON'T GET IT ?!

Having read the fourth and final issue, I am convinced that Chaykin could have told this story better in the space of a single, annual-sized volume.

The missing elements come more strongly into focus here. The supporting characters, introduced in so fine a manner, are little more than window dressing. Their major contribution to the conflict is to knock on people's hotel doors to create a diversion. As a friend commented, they might just as well have phoned each occupant and asked if they had Prince Albert in a can.

Chaykin also failed completely in portraying the world of the Shadow. Blazing guns is but one element of that milieu; the rest is darkness and intrigue and the evil in men's hearts. What little darkness exists in Chaykin's story is dispelled by the brightness of rivers of blood. Evil is overshadowed by his continuing wish to explore the spectrum of sexual fantasies.

Even in that arena, where Chaykin is a proven master, he stumbles. The sudden announcement that two of the major protagonists are suffering from AIDS comes off as nothing more than a ghoulish and totally gratuitous afterthought.

This perversity for perversity's sake reaches its logical, if completely anti-climactic, height as the story comes to its end. After a four-issue build-up, the main villain is dispatched in a single panel—shot by his nymphomaniacal wife, who is obsessed with her desire to experience orgasm against the back-drop of nuclear holocaust!

Walter Gibson would be too stunned to spin in his grave.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing about this issue is that it sets up the possibility of a sequel. Four months ago, that prospect would have evoked glee; now it sends more shudders down my spine than does the Shadow's frightful laugh.

There is no qustion that Howard Chaykin is one of the major talents in comics today, but even the deepest of creative wells will occasionally run dry. Here, he has produced significant sound and fury, but no brilliance. There's no form behind the flash. It was a major disappointment. Like the mythological Icarus, *The Shadow* started from the heights, but quickly fell to earth: a crumpled and lifeless mass.

The weed of crime does indeed bear bitter fruit and we've tasted deeply of it in this series. ●

AMAZING READERS

J.M. DeMATTEIS
Accord, NY

Credit Where Due

Recently saw your article on Deathlok—and thought I'd add one important piece of information. Those *Captain America* issues of mine that Alan Stewart enjoyed so much were co-plotted by the book's editor, Mark Gruenwald. In fact, Mark came up with the whole framework for the Deathlok sequence. . . then sent me off to turn the whole thing into an honest-to God *story*.

Considering how strange, confusing, and contradictory the Deathlok saga is—I *never* would've attempted it if I hadn't had Mark urging me on and straightening out the facts.

Anyway. Being the humble guy that he is, Mark never took credit as co-plotter (each time I typed him into the credits, he blue-pencilled himself out). I figure this is as good a time as any to give him the credit he's due.

KEVIN O'NEILL
London, England

Metalzoic Notes

Many thanks for the copies of *Amazing Heroes* #94 and the inclusion of the *Metalzoic* piece from *Speakeasy*. Just to clear up a few points—I did not write "*Metalzoic* on the Move." Richard Ashford, Editor of *Speakeasy*, interviewed me one Sunday afternoon in March for inclusion in his next issue due at the printers the following day. He edited the interview, eliminating his questions and running my replies together. I did not see any of this until it was printed and this explains the painful cart-before-the-horse English and the gremlins running barefoot through the article. Just for the record, Pat Mills and I worked on *Nemesis the Warlock*, the editor of *Look Alive* was Kelvin Gosnell, Andy Helfer became Editor of *Metalzoic* at the *early* pencil stage. Nemesis has a great uncle *Baal* and my comments on toy robot comics still stand but were just off the cuff remarks in reply to a question of Richard's and were not intended to sound so preachy—and clearly *Metalzoic* is a robot book.

I had hoped DC would release to the fan press the abundance of design sketches, roughs, notes and development work prepared for *Metalzoic*. Pat Mills and I have a lot more to say and unpublished work that may be of interest to your audience—How about a definitive *Metalzoic* feature?

Keep up the good work. Cheers for now.

TRACY M LEE

MARV WOLFMAN
Woodland Hills, CA

Out of Sync

In R.A. Jones's review column in issue #95, concerning *Heroes Against Hunger* he mentions that only I failed to smoothly make the transition from the previous story as if I hadn't read what Bob Fleming had written. R.A. was right. . . I wasn't shown his script, just the plot, and therefore didn't know about the contradiction.

However, considering I wrote my pages on September 19th, an hour or so before I left on vacation after the *Crisis*, and the book wasn't published until May, certainly the mistake *could* have been corrected if the editors pointed it out to me, which they didn't. *H.A.H.* was *not* written in sequence but as the artists handed in their pages.

At any rate, had I seen Bob's pages I would not have ignored them. And, if he did his pages after I did mine (he probably did them concurrently), he would not have ignored what I did either.

MICHAEL SAWIN
Princeton, MN

Kirby: Confused on Issues

Ok. Let's get this straight. Jack Kirby, while working for Marvel Comics, produced artwork that he now wants back. Marvel Comics maintains that the artwork is company property, in other words, they say that they have *ownership* of this material.

Frankly, I don't know the issues involved. Why is Kirby after the artwork? Is it because he feels that it will provide financial security in the coming years? Is it because of the long-standing feud between Jack and Stan Lee over who created the Fantastic Four? Does he truly believe that the artwork belongs to him, even though he received pay for it twenty years ago?

Now, it's time to get on Marvel's case. Has Marvel finally turned around company policy about returning artwork? [*It is now, and has been for years, Marvel's policy to return original artwork.* —DS] If they have, then there should be no reason why Kirby's originals shouldn't be returned. Now that comics aren't reprinted as much as they were in the olden days, there is no real reason for the company to retain this material. Surely the artwork, no matter how valuable, doesn't hold that much interest to Marvel. Unless, of course, it is in the private collection of one of the company's principals who does not want to give it back, or the company has made some kind of deal to sell the material to a third party.

I know how the editors of *Amazing Heroes* feel about this controversy but I'm not sure how *I* feel. Unless Marvel can come up with a valid reason to keep the material, they should return it, if there is a company policy about returning artwork.

I think that the material will be lost to iniquity or the basement of some collector if it's returned, however. I think that Kirby has in mind to sell this art, and that will be his prerogative. An artist in this business comes to a point where he can't do the work any more, whether he's just plain tired of it, or health reasons or whatever, and someone who has made such an impact as Kirby has, deserves to be rewarded in just one way. But it would be a shame to break up this collection of priceless work. I wish the work could be returned to Kirby and then sold to a museum or some place that would allow these masterpieces to be seen by the public.

Frankly, I don't think that anyone, including Jack Kirby, had an inkling twenty years ago that this artwork would be as valuable as it is, or he would have taken the necessary precautions to obtain it.

I do resent, however, the use of this issue by some people to further slam Marvel Comics. I am not a fan who believes that Marvel can do no wrong, but I think that fans and fanzines alike are being hard on the company that brings in the bread and butter of the medium. I think it's wise to remember, though, that our literary diets need more than bread and butter to survive, and so does the comics medium.

PAUL GROMAN
New York, NY

Kirby: Both Sides Now

After reading one of your letter columns, which suggests that some "thoughtful" letters be sent in, including comments on the Jack Kirby artwork controversy, I thought that I'd take a stab at it myself. Being a follower from issue one, it took a topic of this importance to make me write my first letter.

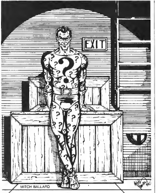
An issue in this area requires a great deal of thought and produces no easy answers. After all, with the exception of Ditko's Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, didn't Kirby create the foundation of what is the Marvel Universe, including the likes of the Hulk, The Fantastic Four, Thor, and The Avengers (all of course done in collaboration with Stan Lee). Is Marvel fair, becoming rich off a universe (not to be confused with "The New Universe") Kirby created, at the same time not giving him the least bit of compensation? Finally it seems to be quite insulting that Marvel wants to settle by giving him the small amount of his artwork that remains in their vaults.

All this and more, could be and is being used by Kirby's side of the matter, but I'm not sure I agree with the pro-creators rights side on this issue.

For the most part my personal persuasion bears no love for Marvel. In fact, at the present time my personal buying list includes only a couple of their mainstream titles, and after Byrne and Miller leave all that will be left are *Thor*, *Marvel Fanfare* and *Cloak and Dagger*. From what I've heard of the company, their policies have become harsher and more unfair over the years, which is probably the reason that most of their talent appears to be flowing out at the seams. My attitude may reflect much of the current fan markets, which is precisely the reason extra efforts must be extended to look at this matter impartially.

Taking all this into consideration, Marvel's side of the matter has a couple of points of its own. The most obvious one is that when Kirby drew these stories, he knew what the rules were, which I don't think included the return of his artwork. When he drew those stories, the artists were paid and credited for the work they did. [*There is still a running dispute as to whether Kirby received proper credit for his work—particularly plotting.* —DS] and that is exactly the treatment Marvel has accorded him. Now don't get me wrong, creator's rights may have been long overdue at the time, but they weren't the agreement under which work was commissioned. It's not as if he has received no recognition for the work he has done. [*When Cannon films advertised for the movie Captain America, Kirby's lawyers had to fight to get the copy changed that said "created by Stan Lee." Stan, of course, had nothing to do with the creation of Captain America.* —DS] The problem comes where Marvel refuses to give him the kickbacks [*Look that word up in the dictionary, pal. If that's the word you really want to use, then you're slandering somebody who certainly doesn't deserve to be judged by somebody of your status.* —DS] he feels he deserves. The moral debate still remains somewhat questionable but legally they have done nothing wrong. Do you think a chemist can claim rights to a drug he has invented at the pharmaceutical company that he works for? [*Many do.* —DS] The fact remains that Jack Kirby was paid a fee by Marvel, for his services and that is all they were and are responsible for.

RICHARD DANNYS



MITCH BALLARD

If they chose to honor this man by giving him what he wants, there is nothing wrong with that, but otherwise it would be pretty hard to prove they had committed any violation.

DAVID PEATTIE
Concord, CA

Kirby: On Marvel's Side

In your recent "Jonny Quest" issue, you asked for some letters that talked about something other than Marvel's *Secret Wars* or DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and I agree . . . those topics have been talked to death by this time. One of the replacement subjects you mentioned was the Jack Kirby's Artwork controversy . . . and since I have some very definite opinions about that situation, I thought I'd take this time to share them with you.

You may find this hard to believe, but I think I'm on Marvel's side in this case.

It seems to me that the only reason Marvel is keeping Kirby's artwork from him in the first place is because they want him to sign that "work-made-for-hire" agreement. Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't that agreement involve Marvel's right to reprint the artwork in the future if they want to? I think it has to be something like that, because otherwise I can't think of a single reason why Kirby would need to sign an agreement of any sort to get his originals back.

If that is indeed the case, then don't all you Kirby-supporters feel that Marvel *should* have the right to reprint his work when they want to? After all, they *did* publish it in the first place, and it's not like they don't pay reprint royalties or anything.

Right now, Marvel is publishing no less than three series that make use of reprinted artwork: *The Marvel Saga*, *The Marvel Index Series* and *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*. Why should Marvel commission all-new artwork for those series, at great expense and time, when they can get the same results by reprinting it from the original comics? And I haven't even mentioned the trade paperbacks, calendars and other goodies that also make use of reprinted artwork. When you get right down to it, Marvel stands to lose quite a bit if they don't have the right to reprint Jack's work for them when they want.

Jack Kirby is a big boy. He was a full-grown adult when he first began working for Marvel Comics, way back when; he knew precisely what the rules of the game were. And he should be completely aware of why Marvel wants to be able to reprint his work so badly. If he isn't aware of it already, someone should point it out to him. Perhaps then he'd rethink his position . . . which I feel is more than a little unreasonable.

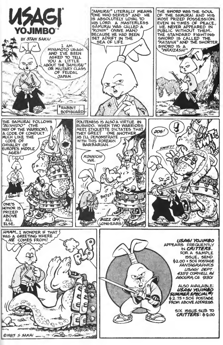
If the business of reprinting the stuff didn't enter into it, then I would be like the rest of you, and side with Kirby. I can fully understand why he wants his work back, and if I were a honcho at Marvel I'd have no problem in giving it back to him . . . but we all have to remember that Marvel Comics is a *business*. They are in this game to make money . . . and if there's money to be made in reprinting the material, then the people at Marvel would have to be fools to throw that opportunity away, and Jack would be an even bigger fool if he did not recognize that fact and tailor his requests accordingly.

It is obvious that there is no binding legal incentive for Marvel to just give Jack his originals unconditionally; otherwise, Jack could merely have gone to the police and sought some sort of court order. Marvel would have lost and that would be that.

But Marvel hasn't lost, because Kirby can't do that. Jack should have enough brains to realize that Marvel has a very good reason for their position in this case, and try to attack his problems from a stronger foundation. I certainly don't think Marvel is asking for the moon, here; they're trying to protect their interests, just as Jack thinks he's protecting his. Would it kill Jack to accept Marvel's reprint royalties, sign the damned agreement, and make everyone happy? I don't think so.

I realize that if you print this, my opinion will be in the minority and that some of the readership is likely to start ranting and raving at me. To those people, I say: I know how you all feel about Jack, and I sympathize. The man is a great talent and always will be, and his work has given me as much pleasure as it has you . . . but Jack Kirby is not God, any more than Marvel Comics is, and if any of you can find any flaw in my logic or my appreciation of the facts in the case, then I welcome you to correct me. Perhaps I'll change my mind.

But if you can't, then don't you think


USAGI™
YOJIMBO™
BY STAN SAKAI
I AM MIYAMOTO USAGI* AND I'VE BEEN ASKED TO TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT THE "SAMURAI" OR MILITARY CLASS OF FEUDAL JAPAN.
*RABBIT BODYGUARD
"SAMURAI" LITERALLY MEANS "ONE WHO SERVES" AND HE IS ABSOLUTELY LOYAL TO HIS LORD. A MASTERLESS SAMURAI WAS CALLED A "RONIN" (WAVE MAN) BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN SET ADRIFT IN THE SEA OF LIFE.
THE SWORD WAS THE SOUL OF THE SAMURAI AND HIS MOST PRIZED POSSESSION. EVEN IN TIMES OF PEACE, HE NEVER APPEARED IN PUBLIC WITHOUT THEM. THE STANDARD FIGHTING SWORD IS CALLED THE "KATANA" AND THE SHORTER SWORD IS A "WAKIZASHI".
THE SAMURAI FOLLOWS "BUSHIDO" (THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR), A CODE OF CONDUCT MUCH LIKE THE CODE OF CHIVALRY OF EUROPE'S MIDDLE AGES!
ONE'S HONOR IS PRIZED ABOVE ALL ELSE.
POLITENESS IS ALSO A VIRTUE IN BUSHIDO. WHEN TWO WARRIORS MEET, ETIQUETTE DICTATES THAT THEY GREET ONE ANOTHER AS I'LL DEMONSTRATE WITH THIS FOREIGN BARBARIAN.
KONNICHI WA.
BRZZZT
BUZZ OFF, LONG EARS!
DOG!
!
SWIFT!
VWIT!
HMMM... I WONDER IF THAT WAS A GREETING WHERE HE COMES FROM!
PLOP
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DAVE NELSON

maybe *you* should re-evaluate your side of the argument?

And no, before anyone asks, I am *not* related to anyone at Marvel Comics, nor am I on their payroll. I'm just interested in seeing both sides of an argument, and in trying to be fair.

It seems to me that there are too many people who are willing to use any excuse to dump on Marvel Comics, probably because they're the top sellers right now. I am not one of those people: I buy a lot of comics, from *all* the publishers, and while a fair share of them are Marvel's, I'm not so gaga over the company that I'll buy each and every book that has their name on it. If they do something that honestly does anger me, and that I feel very strongly about, then they will indeed hear from me about it. But this time, I think a lot of people aren't being fair to Marvel.

I just don't want the comic public's high opinion of Jack's work to color their judgment, so that they railroad Marvel into doing something that will ultimately hurt both them and us. Jack is as capable of making mistakes as anyone else; this, I think, is one of them. Let's not beat Marvel up for it; let's instead be fair, and put the blame where it's due.

When Marvel messes up, they must expect us to take them to task for it. Jack has messed up, and yet everyone is applauding his position. I just think that people should be made aware of Marvel's side of things, and where they're coming from, so that they can make a fair judgement for themselves.

And in sympathy with that, I'd like to publicly ask Fantagraphics Books and all the other independent comics companies to stop running the Jack Kirby petition in their books until they have given Marvel's position equal time, and had a chance to gauge the public reaction to the *whole* story.

● *Your letter really pissed me off. Who are you to give a lecture on knowing both sides of the story when you don't know anything about the issues involved (including the fact that Marvel has repeatedly been asked to give its side of the story and repeatedly refused)?*

(Sigh) Where to start? To begin, I suggest you hunt up a copy of The Comics Journal *#105 to get all the details on the Kirby controversy, but in the meantime let me try to address some of your misconceptions.*

First off, you should understand that Marvel has no vested interest in keeping Jack's art other than to extort the release from him. They aren't going to sell it, and they don't need it for reprints (reprints are virtually never shot from the original art; they use the negatives for that).

And what was the whole point of that argument, anyway? Jack has created so damn much for Marvel it would be a pain in the ass if they couldn't reprint his work? They might be embarrassed that so much of his artwork has been stolen, but that's not why they're withholding his art. Why then do they refuse to return his artwork? Why would they insist that he sign a four page release form (the standard release for every other artist is only a page long) that would cede any rights he has to his creations if he had already given up those rights?

It may seem pretty clear to you that Marvel owns those characters but it isn't very clear to anyone else—otherwise Marvel's lawyers wouldn't be making such a big stink about it. (If they thought the rights were all sewn up, why bother forcing Jack to sign the paper?) Until the mid-'70s the only thing a creator signed was a note on the back of his paycheck that gave Marvel the rights to the images—not the actual artwork. Besides, the point is there was no such thing as a work-for-hire agreement when Jack created The Fantastic Four, the Hulk, et al with Stan Lee. Consequently he would have some rights to those characters. If he signed the release he would be giving up all rights to those characters forever. That is, as far as I can tell, why Marvel is holding onto his artwork.

I can't really speak for Jack but from what I've read, I don't think he's especially interested in getting the rights or royalties to the Marvel characters he created (though he certainly deserves a piece of the very big Marvel pie). The legal fees alone for such an endeavor would be prohibitive. He just wants his art back.

Gary Groth estimates the value of Kirby's artwork at being about $750,000 ($75 a page—a conservative estimate actually—times 10,000 pages of artwork). But that's secondary, really.

Try this quote on for size: "We, the publishing houses, are paying only for the right to reproduce the work. The ownership of the page, the actual object, belongs unequivocally to the artist, and the artist alone. The return of artwork is an artist's inalienable right." That's from a letter signed by Jenette Kahn, Dick Giordano, and Paul Levitz run in the aforementioned Comics Journal *#105. It is standard industry practice to return art. It's Marvel's policy to return art.*

What else is onerous about the release? How does this sound to you: "Marvel Comics Group is pleased to be able to provide as a **gift** *(bold face mine) to the Artist physical custody of the specific portion of the original Artwork identified above ... subject to ... the Artist's acknowledgements and undertakings provided in this Agreement."*

Gift? That's just plain bullshit and a real insult. Roz Kirby sums up some of the other items on the special Kirby release form: "If Jack signs this, they can walk into our house and get the art that they were returning to us. Or if someone wanted to sue [Marvel], Jack couldn't help them."

Why else shouldn't Jack have to sign that release? Well, he shouldn't have to be singled out with a special form (It's reprinted in Comics Journal *#105). Also, by signing that form he is essentially being forced to renounce his creative input on those characters. If that seems like a legal quibble, just stop and think about it for a second. Now think about it in terms of what Jack Kirby has created for Marvel. It's obscene that he should have to sign such a form.*

If none of this has convinced you, consider the comic book professionals who signed the petition: Frank Miller, Bill Sienkiewicz, Gil Kane, Neal Adams, Robert Crumb, Garry Trudeau, Marv Wolfman, Rick Obadiah, Dean Mullaney, Cat Yronwode, Alan Moore, Mike Baron, Carl Barks to name but a few. These are people who work in the industry and understand the issues. Surely you must respect the opinion of some of these people.

And what's all this shit about "railroad[ing] Marvel into doing something that will ultimately hurt both them and us"? This is the company that got Marvelman changed to Miracleman, got Wolveroach off the cover of Cerebus, is keeping Rocketeer *from hitting the stands, and still managed to publish a 12-issue limited series using DC's characters. Their lawyers* do *the railroading, not vice-versa. In a recent interview with a British fanzine Jim Shooter said that he'd love to give Jack's art back but it's all in the lawyers' hands. I'm sure he'd like the whole thing over and done with but Shooter is responsible for how his company is run and it seems worse than ingenuous to blame it on the lawyers.*

I didn't realize fandom at large was so ill-informed on this issue and to be honest I'm wary of making the negotiations between Kirby and Marvel any more difficult than they are. But you must understand that the man deserves your support. The company that he helped to found is engaged in strong-arm legal tactics to pressure him into signing an agreement that he doesn't want to sign. It's the moral equivalent of blackmail and Jack Kirby doesn't deserve that from Marvel Comics.

—DS

JOE FRANK
Scottsdale, AZ

Loki's in Charge

"Respect." It's a word that's been bandied about quite a bit in this, Marvel's 25th Anniversary year. We've heard (in hushed tones, no doubt) how Marvel reveres the Kirby and Ditko creations. How very unusual then that Jack and Steve aren't a part of this gala bash! Did their embossed invites get lost in the mail, or possibly, is there another explanation?

Amid the cake and streamers, those of us who don't have our smiles painted on are left to ponder the whereabouts of the guests of honor. August marks for me exactly 20 years since I met Jack at a 12-cent ringside seat to the classic Thing/Silver Surfer battle (*Fantastic Four* #55).

What "The House of Ideas" seems to have misunderstood is that we spent our lunch money on the books for years because we love Jack's work, not because it said "Marvel" on the cover.

Pathetic that now, years later, corporate policy should be so indifferent to the men who built the company.

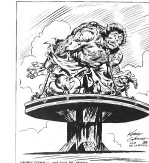
Yes, Marvel's good at counting candles. They're tops when it comes to the zealous placement of trademark symbols. Morally, however, Loki's ruling Asgard.

Corporate greed precludes any new Kirby material in the FF Anniversary issue. Luckily *Amazing Heroes* #100 will be hitting the stands around the same time. Thankfully you haven't forgotten him. We, his fans, haven't either. Jack didn't wear a "4" chest insignia but was just as important to the book as Reed or Ben.

"Kirby forever" you said? Sounds good to me!

ELEKTRA
ASSASSIN
WOLVERINE
X-MAN

JACK LEE



KERRY GAMMILL and SAM DELAROSA

GARRY R. JONES
Washington, DC

Watching DC

Watchmen #1 is a very good book, one that deserves as much media attention (if not more) as Miller's *Dark Knight* and Byrne's *Superman*. It is the kind of material that could elevate DC to a very respectable position. It's the kind of book a comic company should stand behind proudly because of the care and craftsmanship the creators have put into it.

Metalzoic, the recent DC graphic novel, surprised me. I didn't think I was going to like it, but there is a well thought-out concept behind it. Like *Watchmen*, it is well-executed and gripping. The machines look better than the humans, too.

Byrne's art in *The New Teen Titans Annual* bodes ill for Marvel even though Jose Luis Garcia Lopez's inking was rather rough and sketchy. The assortment of angles and the fine intricate detail of the dinosaurs shows an inspiration and interest in quality lacking in most of Byrne's later Marvel product. If Byrne had used more of his skills and creativity on *Alpha Flight* throughout his *entire run*, Marvel might have had a supergroup that matched (or surpassed) the popularity and success of *The X-Men* and *The New Teen Titans*.

Crisis on Infinite Earths, despite whatever compromises and mistakes it made, is a commendable effort. The story is so large in scope and ramifications that it *needs* Monarch Notes to explain everything that went on. Hopefully, the shadow-demons' power fluctuations can be explained, but if not, big deal. In the overall framework of *Crisis*, it rankles but won't destroy the entire story because the story itself was done with care and integrity. The presentation of the characters was so well-done that the deaths, especially those of the Crime Syndicate in *Crisis #1*, were regrettable. The tone was set right at the beginning and the threat was made quite clear.

Crisis is another achievement that DC should be extremely proud of.

Who cares about cardboard characters who fight just for the sake of fighting, die without honor, dignity or nobility (James Hudson, *Alpha Flight #12*), and are brought back to life with cop-out excuses and Godlike ease (*The Secret Wars* and the Michael "epic" in *The Avengers*, both written by Jim Shooter)?

Who's watching DC? I will be, and hopefully a lot of other people will, too.

NEIL AHLQUIST
Columbia Heights, MN

Black Orchid Redux

Thanks to David H. Smith for his well-written article on the Black Orchid in *Amazing Heroes #95*. I enjoyed it wholeheartedly, and would like the Floral Fury to return to the mainstream of DC's regular titles.

I'd like to add that I think she could be used to even greater potential. We know she has a sense of humor and "wishful thinking" (as mentioned here in her expressed desire to join the Justice League) but we've never seen her cry. What about a supporting cast? (It's not impossible for a character as mysterious as she—look at the Batman!) How about a detective who is obsessed with finding out who she is? Or a character who discovers he or she is somehow related to the Orchid? What about some battles with established DC villains? Why couldn't she join a super-team? It would be frustrating for other members to have a teammate that showed up whenever she wanted to, and had as many secrets as Orchid does, but the *Legion of Super Heroes* filled up a lot of issues with the Sensor Girl mystery!

These are some of the thoughts that the article stimulated, and ones that are stimulated whenever the Black Orchid's name is mentioned. I'd love to see this beautiful mystery woman soaring through the comics pages again! Anyone in DC Land, if you're listening, let's see more of the Black Orchid!

STEVEN ROBINSON
No Address

Simonson on X-Factor??

Walt Simonson to draw *X-Factor*? No way! It's bad enough that Sal Buscema is now drawing *Thor*—out of a Marvel artistic lineup *jammed* with talent, *he's* all Marvel could find to draw one of their *best* titles—but now Marvel has Simonson drawing a title they couldn't *pay* me to read. Is it any wonder that Marvel are in trouble? There's only *one* title beside *Thor* worthy of Simonson's talent—*The Fantastic Four*. It would be fitting if, in their 25th year, Marvel made him writer and artist of *both* their greatest titles. With Byrne, Starlin and Miller gone, Simonson, along with Bill Mantlo, are Marvel's *only* truly creative writers. It would make *sense* for Marvel to let Simonson have both the *Fantastic Four* and *Thor*. Forget *X-Factor*; it's a cheat anyway. We *all* know that Jean Grey is really Delphine Courtney's (may she rest in pieces)

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This is not a popularity contest; this is a chance for the members of the comics industry to recognize the excellent work of their colleagues during the previous year. The nominees below should be judged on the quality of the work. Nominations are based on preliminary ballots received from comics editors, publishers, distributors, and distribution warehouse managers.

Awards will be presented to the nominees receiving the most votes from this balloting at the 1986 San Diego Comic Convention.

Please fill out the name and address section completely. Retailer ballots that don't include a retail tax number AND a telephone number that can be verified will be discarded. Write-in votes are welcome; attach on another sheet of paper.

Encourage other retailers and creators to participate; let's make these awards something that the comics industry can be proud of—a shining example of the finest in American comics.

Best Single Issue
- ☐ *Daredevil #227* — Marvel Comics
- ☐ *Mage #8* — Comico
- ☐ *Miracleman #1* — Eclipse
- ☐ *Superman Annual #9* — DC Comics
- ☐ *Swamp Thing #43* — DC Comics
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Artist
- ☐ Alan Davis — *Batman and the Outsiders*
- ☐ Jaime Hernandez — *Love and Rockets*
- ☐ Steve Rude — *Nexus*
- ☐ P. Craig Russell — *Pelleas and Melisande*
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Writer
- ☐ Gilbert Hernandez — *Love and Rockets*
- ☐ Frank Miller — *Daredevil*
- ☐ Alan Moore — *Miracleman*
- ☐ Alan Moore — *Swamp Thing*
- ☐ Matt Wagner — *Mage*
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Writer/Artist (single or team)
- ☐ Mike Baron/Steve Rude — *Nexus*
- ☐ Frank Miller/David Mazzuchelli — *Daredevil*
- ☐ Alan Moore/Steve Bissette — *Swamp Thing*
- ☐ Matt Wagner — *Mage*
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Art Team
- ☐ John Byrne/Jerry Ordway — *Fantastic Four*
- ☐ Steve Bissette/John Totleben — *Swamp Thing*
- ☐ George Perez/Jerry Ordway — *Crisis on Infinite Earths*
- ☐ Dave Sim/Gerhard — *Cerebus the Aardvark*
- ☐ Matt Wagner/Sam Kieth — *Mage*
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Graphic Album
- ☐ *Hard Times* (American Flagg!) — First Comics
- ☐ *Love and Rockets Book One* — Fantagraphics Books
- ☐ *The Original Nexus* — First Comics
- ☐ *Rocketeer Graphic Novel* — Eclipse
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Continuing Series
- ☐ *Daredevil* — Marvel Comics
- ☐ *Love and Rockets* — Fantagraphics Books
- ☐ *Miracleman* — Eclipse
- ☐ *Nexus* — First Comics
- ☐ *Swamp Thing* — DC Comics
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Black-and-White
- ☐ *Cerebus* — Aardvark/Vanaheim
- ☐ *Journey* — Fantagraphics Books
- ☐ *Love and Rockets* — Fantagraphics Books
- ☐ *Stig's Inferno* — Vortex
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best Finite Series
- ☐ *The Black Dragon* — Marvel Comics
- ☐ *Crisis on Infinite Earths* — DC Comics
- ☐ *Longshot* — Marvel Comics
- ☐ *Pelleas and Melisande* — Eclipse
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

Best New Series
- ☐ *'Mazing Man* — DC Comics
- ☐ *Miracleman* — Eclipse
- ☐ *Mr. Monster* — Eclipse
- ☐ *Scout* — Eclipse
- ☐ Write-in vote attached

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younger sister. Don't laugh; we didn't know the Enchantress had a younger sister *either*. Jean Grey *alive* makes as much sense as Delpine's unbelievable tale in *Alpha Flight #25*. *Think* about it.

JEFF SALTARELLA
Hapeville, GA

In Defense of "Wood's War"

Some time ago, my article on MARS Patrol was described as "woefully lacking in facts" and "entirely untrue." I'd like to answer some of the criticisms, if I may. The complaints centered on that portion of the piece which related the background material on Wally Wood, etc.—about one tenth of the entire work.

First off, it was pointed out quite rightly that the EC crowd had other motives for leaving comics than just the Code. However, the post-Code industry showed a huge mortality rate in the number of titles as company after company folded. (EC, at least, blamed the Code.) There just wasn't as much work available anymore. Artists who had been doing a couple of thousand pages of sequential art per year were down to one or two hundred. Coincidentally, many of them turned their attentions elsewhere than comics — the industry was, to many eyes, dying. By the standards of earlier years, the artists were not in demand after the Code—exactly as stated in the article. Taken out of context, it is possible to interpret some of my statements as meaning these super-talents were begging for work. Certainly not, when taken all together as written! The article said, in fact, that each had reasons and directions all his own.

Next, the words "let him" and "allowed" in connection with Wood's return to mainstream comics circa 1964 were meant to indicate that Wood actually *wanted* to do comics. I don't believe that anyone who was reading the article thought that he didn't work at all in those four years! Most fans *know* that pay outside of the comics was generally better—and so are doubly impressed with Wood's devotion to his medium.

Incidentally, the chronology of this article was based on Pure Imagination's *Wood's Treasury*, 1980; it contains a comprehensive listing of all his work, including stuff like the *Galaxy* illos, soft-porn and foreign publications. It is the most complete listing I've ever seen (the only omission I've found is *Exciting Romances #3*, which also isn't listed as by Wood in Overstreet). All I did is sort by date to construct my list.

Now, next I must say that the article did *not* state that Wood did not work for Warren at all. I knew, in fact, that he had done a cover for *Spaceman Annual*, and a movie adaptation in *Monster World* well before *Creepy* & company hit the stands. The article said that Wood wasn't part of Warren's EC revival, a generalization that could admittedly have been better phrased. It would have been just as wrong to say he was part of the whole revival, with only three stories (and a reprint) to his credit during Goodwin's reign. Bhob Stewart's article in *Comics Journal #70* talks about the circumstances behind the Warren/Wood break.

I mentioned that Gold Key offered Wood a book "outside of the Code," which, out of context, does seem to say that Code-ness was part of the deal. Of course, the next sentence should have defused that. I mentioned that *all* Gold Key's books lacked the Code. However, I managed to offend a Mr. Green with this statement anyway by linking into the Disney/Western/no Code situation—perhaps unnecessarily. However, my adjective was quite explainable—most recently, in fact, in Don Edward's "The Forbidden Fruit" in *Qua Brot #1*—last paragraph. I first heard about it in the Dell *RBCC* column, which I'd be happy to list if I still had the darned thing.

I don't feel the article ever actually made any criticism of Western or Wood's ethics, in fact. I happen to feel that Gold Key's standards exceeded most of the Code crowd in general. They were certainly the #1 company of the '40s and '50s. They had the best writers (Mr. Evanier is a good example), artists, and staff people by all accounts. In my opinion (whatever it's worth), the lack of Code restriction helped to foster this atmosphere there. Perhaps some of that colored the wording. So far as the Wood/Western split, I stated only that #3 was Wood's last issue—a fairly objective statement. A careful reader might have noticed that I mentioned the long break between #s 3 and 4—a sign that leaving the title was Wood's idea and that it caught Western unprepared.

● *A letters page dilemma—I knew that Jeff had been thoroughly reamed out in this lettercol a while back and I thought that he deserved a chance to defend himself. But his letter was so long I didn't have space to print the whole thing and I didn't feel comfortable editing a point-by-point rebuttal. The solution: a two-part letter to be concluded next issue—same bat-channel, same bat-station.* —DS

QUENTON B. HOOVER

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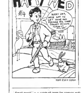
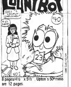
$4.00 ppd. (seperately all are 40¢ each except GRENVILLE and TURTLE, which are 50¢ each. Add 10% postage, 50¢ min., no U.S. stamps) from Colin Upton, 6424 Chester, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V5W 3C3. Mature readers.

Colin Upton's mini-comics don't take long to read. Most are one panel per page stories with very little plot or script, drawn in a spare, ungarnished line style. I'm on record as generally disliking minis that go by as quickly as these, but in Upton's case there's enough going on *between* the lines that it didn't bother me at all that there were so few of them.

The six minis recommended here fall into three basic categories. *Real Rubbie Comix* and *The Granville Street Gallery* are in one group: direct observation. In *Rubbie*, Upton relays his encounters with Vancouver Street Bums (known as Rubbies in Canada) in brief slice-of-slice vignettes, while *Granville* showcases drawings of various people from the inner city. Upton has a *very* sharp eye for pertinent detail and, though unrendered, the *Granville* drawings make effective portraits of both the individuals and the various "types" they willingly represent.



1986 Colin Upton



1986 Colin Upton

8 pages/4½" x 5½". Upton's 50¢ minis are 12 pages.

In another vein, *Happy Ned* and *Socialist Turtle* take shots at some socio-political attitudes—one far right, the other far left—that Upton obviously isn't too fond of. In *Turtle*, a reprint collection of four panel strips, Upton takes a *Pogo*-ish approach to satirizing the "politically correct" crowd. *Happy Ned* is a bit less subtle, and may raise a few eyebrows as it shows Ned—a grinning born-again christian—happily slaughtering "non-believers" in the name of Jesus. Definitely not for everyone.

Loonybox and *Self Indulgent Comics #2* seem to typify a third approach where Upton plays out some more personal insecurities and problems through fictionalized mini-dramas. Both are fantasized well out of the range of "real life" but they obviously have their roots in Upton's own day-to-day struggles. In the case of *Self Indulgent #2* we even get a taste of his attitudes towards the comics themselves.

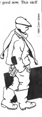
Though many artists draw to escape everyday life, Colin Upton belongs to a growing number who draw *from* it. Taken together, Upton's minis give an ever clearer picture of his outlook on life. There still isn't much to go on; compared to some more accomplished artists, Upton remains a bit stingy in the story department, but given time, the artist *and* his stories will undoubtedly continue to grow.

And back to the drawing board . . .

This is the last installment of s.p.w. that I'll be doing for the foreseeable future. My thanks to the *A.H.* staff for their support in helping me put my spare time to such good use. I would've liked to keep at it, but now that I'm making comics again, that "spare time" just joined Jimmy Hoffa and the 10-cent comic in oblivion.

We're looking into the possibility of continuing the column with a different writer. If you have any feelings on the subject, be sure to drop *AH* a note. And again, if any of you want to continue following small press on your own, I strongly recommend Tim Corrigan's jam-packed newszine *Small Press Comics Explosion* ($3.00 ppd. for 3 monthly issues, $6.00 for 6, $9.00 for 9 or $12.00 for 12, from C&T Graphics, 45 Wilcox St., Rochester NY, 14607), soon to go "national." Tim will keep you well apprised of the hundreds of artists who were hard at work long before this column appeared and aren't about to stop now.

By the way, I'll be one of them. When I said I was "making comics again" I wasn't just talking about my work for Eclipse Comics. Like Dale Luciano and T.M. Maple before me, I'm hooked for good now. This stuff is *contagious*.



1986 Colin Upton

A denizen of *The Granville Street Gallery*.

"Small press" is a catch-all term for comics with low enough print runs that any profit is negligible. Many are photocopied and all titles listed here are in black and white on white paper unless otherwise noted. Page count includes covers.

To order any of the items on this page, just send a short note with your name and address on it listing the comic(s) you want and enclose your payment. Cash is fine, and recommended on small orders, but make sure it doesn't show through the envelope. Also tape down any loose change. The address for each item appears at the beginning of its review. Please do *not* try to order from me or from *Amazing Heroes*.

I'll indicate postage on each item. "Ppd." = post-paid (price includes postage). Stamps, unless otherwise noted, should be the regular 22¢ first class type.

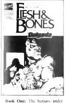
—SCOTT McCLOUD

It's Time

By Jan Strnad

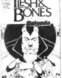
Yep, you've dallied long enough. It's time for you to start picking up "one of the best titles around" (according to Martin Crookall of *Fantasy Advertiser*).

Dal's back in his own mini-series in the first offering from the new *Upshot Graphics* division of *Fantagraphics Books!* Here's what's in store for Dal fans, old and new, in the four-part series *Flesh & Bones*.

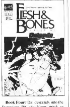


Book One: The humans under Dal's command are revolting, and none of them is more revolting than *Colonel Kenneth Morley*, leading the people in mutiny! Has Dal cracked under the strain?

Book Two: Is it just sub-space psychosis, or is Navigator Stark really seeing angels? Dal's not waiting to find out—he's out to kick tail on the planet of the bubble people! Gunner's new sub-space torpedos are put to the test!



Book Three: Dal's on the trail of his lost people and Stark's under the sway of her "angel"—or is it something more sinister? Meanwhile the Nimp are closing in and the fur is about to fly!



Book Four: Dal descends into the Demnoeon Pit, the Nimp attack in force, the Canidans are caught in the thick of it, and now the whole planet's tearing itself apart! A grand finale to the Saga of Dal!

FLESH& BONES
Dalgoda

And as if that weren't enough, every issue of *Flesh & Bones* sports a complete chapter of the indelible *Bojeffries Saga* by those two crazy Brits **Alan Moore** and **Steve Parkhouse**. Is a humble rent collector any match for a girl who can "turn a cream egg into a diamond and then eat it anyway?" And doesn't the family werewolf violate the rule against keeping pets?

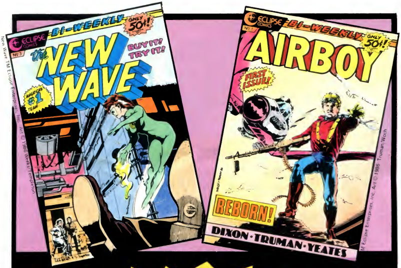
QUIET PLEASE!
I'M A RENTMAN!

Dalgoda's gathered critical acclaim from comics professionals from Frank Miller to Howard Chaykin, reviewers from R.A. Jones to Don Thompson, and about 30,000 fans have loved it too! *Fantasy Advertiser* calls it "one of the finest packages going." Don't you think you've waited long enough?

Look for *Flesh & Bones* at your local comics shop or order it from your subscription service . . . or get it straight from Fantagraphics Books!

To Order: Send check or money order for $8.00 for all four issues of *Flesh & Bones* to: *Flesh & Bones Subs*, Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura CA 91301. All copies are mailed flat in an envelope.

All *Dalgoda* covers 1986 Jan Strnad and Dennis Fujitake. Bojeffries Saga art 1986 Alan Moore and Steve Parkhouse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